

6 WORLD

- China's major political meeting of the year gets underway
- US military aircraft airdrop thousands of meals into Gaza

8 NATION

- INDIA bloc leaders sound poll bugle at Patna rally
- Cafe blast: Police probing different angles including business rivalry

Modi sarkar ki Guarantee Means Guarantee of Ease of Living

Pucca houses for over 4 crore families

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

HT BRIEFS

Heroin seized

GUWAHATI: Two suspected drug peddlers have been arrested and 500 gm of heroin was recovered from their possession in Guwahati, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday. The operation was carried out by the special task force of state police. Two persons were apprehended by the STF after "a hot pursuit in Guwahati", Sarma said in a post on X. "... Search and seizure were conducted on their premises & 34 soap boxes of heroin weighing 500 gm was recovered," the CM added.

New head

GUWAHATI: The Guwahati Refinery, owned by Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), on Sunday said Pradip Kumar Basumatary has taken charge as the chief general manager and refinery head following the superannuation of G K Goyari. Basumatary, a mechanical engineering graduate from Assam Engineering College, took charge on March 1, the company said in a statement. Prior to the new role, Basumatary was the chief general manager (technical) at the Guwahati Refinery. "Basumatary has a rich experience of refinery operation and maintenance, project commissioning, handling fuel quality upgradation projects under BS-VI regime, amongst others," it said.

Vikas Yatra centrally organised at Maibang

Drug abuse, alcoholism hit Dima Hasao hard: CEM

HT Bureau

HAF LONG, March 3: North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) CEM Debolal Gorlosa lamented that entire Dima Hasao has been affected by rampant drug use and many of the youth have been falling prey to the menace of drugs.

CEM Gorlosa was speaking on the occasion of Vikas Yatra centrally organized at Maibang in Dima Hasao where he laid foundation stone, inaugurated and offered bhumi puja of various developmental projects.

Gorlosa addressing the issue of the youth of and peer pressure in current scenario said, "The entire district is facing the menace of drug and has a devastating impact on the addict, individual, family and the society. And it is seen that gradually many of our youth in Dima Hasao are also falling prey to this".

He seemed highly concerned about the growing threat of drug abuse and alcoholism among the youth of the district. He appealed to all the public to raise awareness among the youths of Dima Hasao.



He also said that it is the duty of the guardians to be aware regarding the behaviour and movements of their children and keep a watch on their actions. So the CEM said that the youths must take part in sports for Khelo India as well as it will keep themselves healthy and mentally strong.

The programme was also at-

dom and being public servant as CEM it is our duty to protect and uplift the places towards development with determination and commitment towards building a brighter future for it as well as the district". He added that the ongoing projects and construction work for the road connection with various interior villages with Maibang Sub-Division will soon be completed while the development of the road connecting Maibang to Dehangi is expected to be completed within a year.

Assam minister for Sports & Youth Welfare, Co-operation, Power Nandita Gorlosa, co-operation, power Nandita Gorlosa, while addressing the gathering said that the present government is doing remarkable works in all round development. She said the Council is implementing various projects and schemes with the help of the Central and State government and the public is getting benefit from it. She said most of the interior areas and villages in Dima Hasao were living without electricity but now under the present Government most of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tripura pact to resolve indigenous people's issues historic step: CM



AGARTALA, March 3: The tripartite agreement signed to bring a lasting solution to the problems of Tripura's indigenous people was a historic step to achieve peace and prosperity, Chief Minister Manik Saha said.

The tripartite pact was signed among the Tripura Motha, the Tripura government and the Centre in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday.

"It is a historic day for the state of Tripura, as an important agreement to ensure peace and prosperity was inked," Saha said.

Under the pact, it was agreed to amicably resolve all issues of the indigenous people of Tripura related to history, land and political rights, economic development, identity, culture and language, according to an official statement.

Shah said that with the signing of the agreement, the government has respected history, corrected past wrongs and accepted the present reality to proceed towards a brighter future.

"For the past few months, the Tripura Motha has been raising some issues. Today's development will address the concerns of the opposition party," Saha told a press conference on Saturday.

Lauding the prime minister's focus on peace in the northeast, Saha said altogether 11 accords have been signed by the Centre with different organisations in the region over the past few years. The tripartite (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PM chairs Council of Ministers' meet, brainstorm over 'Viksit Bharat' vision

Modi to attend programmes in 12 states, union territories in next 10 days

NEW DELHI, March 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a day-long meeting of his Council of Ministers as they brainstormed over the vision document for "Viksit Bharat: 2047" and a detailed action plan for the next five years.

Government sources said a 100-day agenda for immediate steps to be taken after a new government is formed in May was deliberated upon during the meeting for its quick implementation.

They said the roadmap for "Viksit Bharat" is a result of more than two years of intensive preparation and involved a "whole of government" approach involving all ministries and wide-ranging



consultations with state governments, academia, industry bodies, civil society, scientific organisations and mobilisation of youths for inputs.

"More than 2,700 meetings, workshops and seminars were held at various levels. Suggestions of more than 20 lakh youths were re-

ceived," one official said.

The roadmap for "Viksit Bharat" has a comprehensive blueprint with clearly articulated national vision, aspirations, goals and action points, the sources said, adding that its goals include areas such as economic growth, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ease of living, ease of doing business, infrastructure and social welfare.

Several ministries articulated their ideas in the meeting, which is likely to be the last such get-together before the Lok Sabha polls are announced.

Modi is set to attend 29 programmes spread across 12 states and union territories over the next 10 days (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam records peak anti drugs success: CM

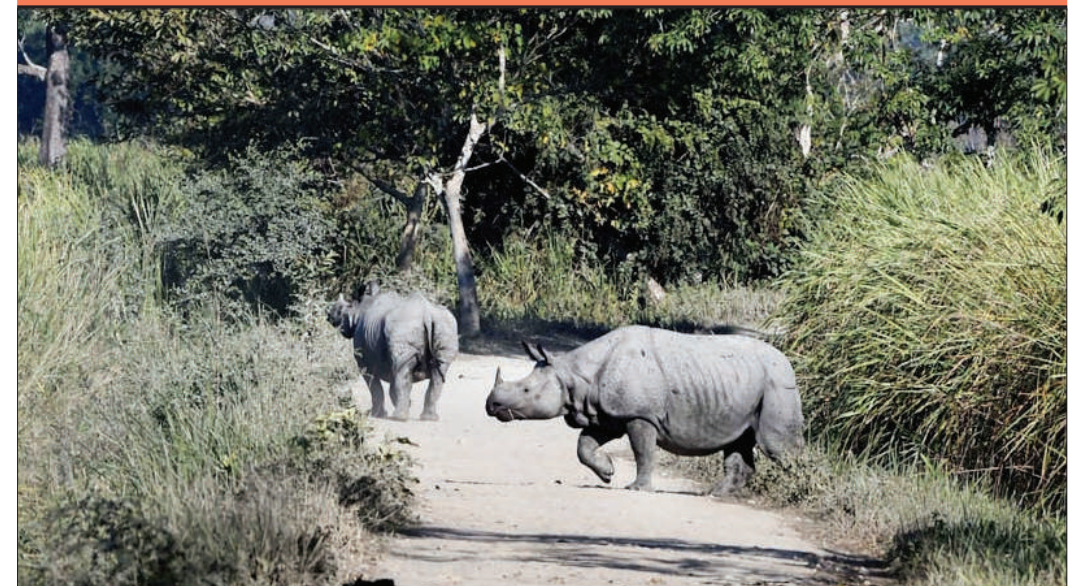
GUWAHATI, March 3: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said 2023 was the most successful year for the state in terms of anti-drugs operations.

The chief minister said drugs worth ₹ 718 crore were seized over 4,700 arrests made during the period.

"The Modi government is deploying a whole-of-government approach to build a #DrugsFreeBharat," Sarma wrote on X.

"In 2023, Assam Police seized drugs worth ₹ 718 cr and arrested over 4,700 drug traffickers making it the most successful year for anti-drugs operations in the state," he added. Sarma also shared a video on the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

FUN AND FROLIC



World famous one horn Rhinos were seen leisurely strolling at the Kaziranga National Park on Sunday. UB photos

Manipur violence: CBI charge sheets seven in Bishnupur armoury loot case

NEW DELHI, March 3: The CBI has filed a charge sheet against seven accused in connection with the looting of arms and ammunition from the Bishnupur police armoury during the Manipur ethnic violence last year, officials said on Sunday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing cases related to the ethnic clashes in Manipur, recently filed its charge sheet before the court of chief judicial magistrate in Kamrup (Metro) in Assam's Guwahati.

The accused named in the charge sheet are Laishram Prem Singh, Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, Moirangthem Anand Singh, Athokpam Kajit alias Kishorjit, Loukrakpam Michael Mangangcha alias Michael, Kontoujam Romojit Meitei alias Romojit, and Keisham Johnson alias Johnson.

On August 3 last year, a mob looted more than 300 weapons,

19,800 rounds of ammunition and other accessories from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters at Naranseina in Bishnupur.

Around 9,000 rounds of bullets of different calibres, an AK series assault rifle, three 'Ghaatak' rifles, 195 self-loading rifles, five MP-5 guns, 16 9mm pistols, 25 bullet-proof jackets, 21 carbines, and 124 hand grenades, among others, were looted by the mob, the officials said.

Barring Laishram Prem Singh and Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapka, the remaining five have been earlier charge-sheeted by the CBI in looting of police armoury at the Manipur Police Training Centre (MPTC) at Pangei in Imphal.

This incident took place on May 4 last year, the day ethnic clashes between the majority Meitei community and tribal Kukis broke out in the northeast state. As alleged in the FIR, a mob stormed into the MPTC complex and looted a huge number of arms and ammunition from the armoury.

Moirangthem Anand Singh is alleged to be a former member of the proscribed People's Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur and the Kangleipak (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Hunting is a way of life for most in our villages' NE youths 'shoot' for responsible tourism



GUWAHATI, March 3: 'Shooting' has been Lemdumong's passion since he was a teenager, but the last couple of years saw the 24-year-old switch from the gun to the video camera to capture the beauty of wildlife and nature.

His new-found love for the audio-visual medium has taken him from his native Nagaland to the high reaches of Sikkim, seeking to help a community of yak herders sustain with the concept of responsible tourism.

He is among 30 youths mentored as part of 'Responsible Tourism Fellowships' by environ-

ment conservation organisation Green Hub and motorcycle manufacturer Royal Enfield to promote sustainable and conscious travel in the Himalayan region.

Lemdumong was part of a three-member group that worked at Chongri in the westernmost part of Sikkim as part of their fellowship, where they engaged with the local community of yak herders to develop a tourist trail focusing on sustainability and adventure.

For this youth from Noklak district of Nagaland, the fellowship was an unexpected turn in life facilitated by his uncle a couple of years back.

"Hunting is a way of life for most in our villages and I was involved in it from 14 years of age. It is mostly need-based for us. In 2021, my uncle Thangson became a fellow under a different programme run by Green Hub and I assisted him in filming the wildlife around our place," Lemdumong told PTI here.

"It was when I saw the pictures and videos of the birds and other animals that I looked at these with new clarity and realised the beauty in them. It was an amazing realisation and a major turning point for me," he said.

Lemdumong applied for the six-month fellowship on responsible tourism and he was among 14 fellows trained in the second batch, which commenced in September 2023, at five project sites across Arunachal Pradesh (Zemithang), Sikkim (Geyzing), Meghalaya (Hima Laitkroh) and Assam (Sonapur and Nagaon).

The fellows presented their unique and hyper-local action plans to build their responsible tourism business models at a conclave here recently.

Lemdumong teamed up with

Lyangsai Tikhak of Arunachal Pradesh, a college drop-out who helps out at his family farm, and Talabya Raj of Assam, a travel vlogger.

The trio is hopeful that they will be able to pitch their business model for an 8-15 days trial with the yak herders of Chongri to interested investors, while at the same time, they are also raring to return to their homes and ensure that their communities benefit from the knowledge and exposure they have acquired.

The fellows also produce a documentary as part of the programme, shooting at their sites and filming the local populace, putting their idea of conservation on film.

Rita Banerji, founder of Project Green Hub, said the six-month fellowship is aimed at creating a network of youth who can help mainstream the idea of responsible tourism.

"It is a ground-up approach where the action plan for each site is being developed, hand-in-hand with communities. The conclave helps to bridge communities to the larger travel industry," she said.

A leading environment filmmaker (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Shehbaz Sharif becomes Pakistan PM

ISLAMABAD, March 3: Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday became the prime minister of Pakistan for a second time to lead a coalition government after he comfortably won a majority in the newly-elected Parliament amidst sloganeering by the Opposition.

Shehbaz, 72, who was the consensus candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), received 201 votes, 32 more than what was required to become leader of the House in the 336-member Parliament.

Shehbaz's challenger Omar Ayub Khan of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured 92 votes.

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq announced the results appointing Shehbaz as the 24th prime minister of Pakistan.

Shehbaz will be administered the oath of office on Monday at the Presidential mansion, Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The session of the new parliament convened amid ruckus and sloganeering by PTI-backed lawmakers. The PTI-backed lawmakers shouted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt's rs 76,000 crore of incentives have got four players including micron and tatas

India to be on high-stake global stage of chip makers in 5 years: IT minister Vaishnaw

NEW DELHI, March 3: India will, in next five years, join the high-stake global stage of semiconductor manufacturing as it combines unparalleled design capabilities with USD 10 billion of incentives to draw manufacturers to set up new fabs and units that will cut dominance of Taiwan, South Korea and China, said IT and Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

In an interview to PTI, he said India's well-crafted policies are tempting manufacturers to set up new fabs (semiconductor fabrication plants) and pouring investment in related sectors.

Semiconductors are an essential component of electronic devices, and are used in automobiles to computers, mobile phones and even washing machines.

India already has factories of best known automobile companies -- from Renault-Nissan to Hyundai, computer makers such as Dell, Apple suppliers and electronic makers like Samsung which produce TVs, washing machines and fridges, among others.

Now, India is eyeing to step up the manufacturing value chain with a high-stake semiconductor manufacturing. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's ₹ 76,000 crore of incentives have got four players including Micron and Tatas.

Vaishnaw said the country already has roughly one-third of global design talent.

His government is leveraging this and India's geopolitical clout to become an indispensable partner for tech ambitions of the US, which like other western economies, is looking to decouple their supply chains from China.

Beijing's draconian lockdowns had disrupted global chip supply and sent companies and governments on a hunt for alternative



sources of production. India is offering itself as a democratic and trusted alternative tech hub to China.

"People who were earlier thinking when should we go to India or should we go to India...now they are asking how soon do we go to India...that is the change which is happening. This means, practically every big player would now like to reconsider their investment plans and come to India," he said.

Asked about the timelines when India would aim to be a formidable player rivaling known semiconductor destinations, the minister said "in the coming 5 years, definitely".

Last week, the Cabinet approved proposals to set up three semiconductor plants, including a mega fab by Tata Group, at a cumulative investment of ₹ 1.26 lakh crore, as India moved to position itself as an international powerhouse in chip manufacturing.

"...it is very important for any developing country, an economy of our size, to have a semiconductor supply chain within the country. We have very strong design capabilities, as a corollary of design capabilities we must have the manufacturing capability also because that is where value gets added further," Vaishnaw explained.

The semiconductor plants will make India self-reliant, trigger a multiplier effect on economy and various industries, create job and spur livelihoods, according to the minister.

"The semiconductor industry is a big multiplier for many more industries -- automobiles, electric vehicle, electronics, power electronics, defence -- every manufacturing sector requires semiconductors. So having that as a semiconductor value chain within the ecosystem will be pull for all of these," Vaishnaw said.

As per the announcements, Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera's special industrial region in Gujarat.

The plant will have the capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and involve an investment of ₹ 91,000 crore.

These chips driven by advanced technology will cater to multiple sectors -- power management chips for electric vehicles (EV), telecom, defence, automotive, consumer electronics, display, and power electronics.

The government has also approved a proposal by Tatas to build a greenfield semiconductor assem-

bly and test facility in Jagiroad, Assam. The facility will be built with an investment outlay of ₹ 27,000 crore and is expected to generate over 27,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region. Notably, this will be India's first semiconductor unit in the northeast.

Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test (TSAT) will develop indigenous advanced semiconductor packaging technologies, including flip chip and ISIP (integrated system in package) technologies, with a capacity of 48 million chips per day. The target segments for these would be automotive, electric vehicles, consumer electronics, telecom, and mobile phones, among others.

The third proposal that have received the Cabinet nod is the one by CG Power, which in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand will set up a unit in Sanand in Gujarat at an investment of ₹ 7,600 crore.

India is looking to woo global and domestic chip makers to establish production base in India with the multi billion dollar (USD 10 billion) incentive scheme.

Sophisticated chips are part of everyday life, used in mobile phones to refrigerators and cars to high-tech industries, and so fostering local industry with carefully-crafted schemes and incentives will link India to an ever-growing, thriving global chip market.

As it is, the global semiconductor shortage in the past has emphasised the importance of this critical component in modern day electronics.

Earlier, computer storage chip maker Micron has announced it will set up its semiconductor assembly and test plant in Gujarat, entailing a total investment of USD 2.75 billion (around Rs 22,540 crore). (PTI)

India-UAE non-oil trade target of USD 100 billion by 2030 ambitious, but achievable: CII President

ABU DHABI, March 3: The target of USD 100 billion non-oil trade between India and the UAE by 2030 is ambitious but achievable as huge business opportunities are there in both the nations for sectors such as textiles, jewellery and pharma, CII President R Dinesh said on Sunday.

He said that the free trade agreement between India and the UAE, which was implemented in May 2022, has resulted in a surge in bilateral trade and investments. Dinesh was here to participate in global investors' event 'Investopia' and various bilateral meetings, including with many participants at the WTO (World Trade Organisation) Ministerial Conference.

"The target to achieve USD 100 billion in non-oil trade between India and UAE is ambitious but I do believe that it is achievable and recent developments are encouraging in this regard," the CII president told PTI here.

He said that the agreement, officially dubbed as comprehensive economic partnership agreement, covers

duty-free access to all labour-intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles and apparel, leather, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and many engineering products. The bilateral trade has already touched USD 84.9 billion in 2022-23, and India is now the UAE's top non-oil trading partner.

"India's vast consumer base and growing manufacturing capabilities offer an attractive market for UAE goods, while the UAE's status as a global trade hub facilitates Indian export access to international markets," he said.

The UAE is a major supplier of crude oil to India. Oil shipments account for a major share of bilateral trade between the countries.

"This agreement is a game-changer, offering opportunities for businesses in services ranging from telecommunications, construction and development, education, environment, financial sector, health services, tourism and films, hospitality, and maritime and air transport services, among others," he added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Drug abuse, alcoholism hit

the villages are electrified, this marking as a big achievement. Highlighting the youths who are sports lovers from the district, Ministers briefed about the programmes and objectives of the Khelo India youth game.

The programme began with the welcome speech by District Commissioner Simanta Kumar Das, ACS and said that the government launched Vikas Yatra for 10 days starting from March 1 to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of various developmental projects in a state wide. He informed that in total amounting of ₹ 377 cr has been inaugurated, laid foundation stone and bhumi puja of various departmental development projects in the district which where inauguration of PWSS under JIM at soil conservation, inauguration of bridge at Kalachand irrigation-II, laid foundation stone of protection wall of Maibang area at sating and bhoomi puja for the construction of New building of Maibang Sr. Secondary School, bhoomi puja of New Science block at Haflog, etc here today.

Others present during the programme were chairman of NCHAC, executive members and MACs of NCHAC, principal secretary of NCHAC, secretaries, other officials and general public.

Tripura pact to resolve indigenous

agreement among Tripura Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance, popularly known as Tipra Motha, and the state and central governments was signed at North Block in New Delhi.

Taking to social media, Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debarma said the party has signed a historical accord.

"We have to implement our land rights, funding pattern, language (script) issue, political representation and also correct our historical and cultural pride," he said in a Facebook post. (PTI)

PM chairs Council of Ministers' meet,

ahead of the likely announcement of the Lok Sabha polls. Officials said he will be visiting Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Delhi.

On Monday, he will unveil multiple development projects in Adilabad in Telangana and later visit the Bharatiya Nabhiya Vidyut Nigam Limited (BHAVIN) in Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu.

He will address public meetings in Adilabad as well as Chennai, the officials said.

Modi will launch several projects in Sangareddy in Telangana on March 5 and address an event before travelling to Odisha where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of numerous development initiatives.

He will then address a public meeting in Chandikhole in Odisha before travelling to West Bengal.

On March 6, he will unveil development projects in Kolkata and address a public meeting in Barasat. He will then travel to Bihar and inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple development projects in Bettiah, the officials said.

The prime minister will be in Jammu and Kashmir on March 7 and attend a media event in Delhi in the evening. On March 8, he will participate in the first-ever National Creator's Award in Delhi and then leave for Assam in the evening. Modi will inaugurate the Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng and then unveil multiple development projects in Itanagar.

Later, he will unveil a statue of legendary Ahom army commander Lachit Borphukan in Jorhat, Assam.

Thereafter, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple development projects in Jorhat, the officials said. He will also visit West Bengal and launch development projects in Siliguri and address a public meeting there. On March 10, Modi will be in Uttar Pradesh and will dedicate to the nation various projects in Azamgarh, they said.

He will attend an event in Delhi the next day related to 'Namo Drone Didi' and 'Lakhpati Didi' programmes. Then, he will inaugurate the Haryana section of the Dwaraka Expressway. In the evening, he will attend a Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) programme.

On March 12, he will visit Sabarmati in Gujarat and Pokhran in Rajasthan and then lay the foundation stones of three important semiconductor projects in Gujarat and Assam via video conferencing on March 13.

He is also scheduled to attend an outreach programme for disadvantaged sections of society via video conferencing, they said. The prime minister has been unveiling a slew of development projects running into lakhs of crores of rupees at various places as he turns the spotlight on his government's development and welfare agenda in the run-up to the general elections expected to be held in April-May. (PTI)

Assam records peak anti drugs

various steps being taken by the central government in the war on drugs. Meanwhile, two persons were arrested and 500 grams of heroin was recovered from their possession in Guwahati, Sarma said in another post on X.

The operation was carried out by the special task force of state police. Two persons were apprehended by the STF after a hot pursuit in Guwahati, Sarma said.

"... Search and seizure were conducted on their premises & 34 soap boxes of heroin weighing 500 gm was recovered," the CM added. (PTI)

Manipur violence: CBI charge sheets

Communist Party (Noyon), while the remaining are believed to be underground workers of valley-based banned terror outfits. They had earlier been arrested by the Manipur Police in September last year when they were allegedly extorting money by wearing police uniform and carrying sophisticated weapons, the officials said. Their arrest had sparked off a protest that continued for two days.

The five were released following a court order but Singh was picked up by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), placed under arrest and brought to the national capital.

Singh was arrested for allegedly having links with Myanmar-based rebel groups and conspiring to wage war against India by exploiting the current ethnic unrest in Manipur.

While Singh is in judicial custody, the fate of the other six was not immediately known.

The Supreme Court in August last year had transferred all CBI cases from Manipur to Assam.

The top court's direction came during a hearing of a batch of petitions related to the clashes in Manipur. Among the petitioners were two Kuki women whose assault by a mob was recorded on video which went viral later. Among the slew of measures announced by the apex court were ensuring recording of statements of the victims through video conferencing and also directing the chief justice of the Gauhati High Court to nominate judicial officers above the rank of judicial magistrate (first class) and sessions judge to deal with cases related to the Manipur violence.

The state has witnessed escalating violence since May 3, 2023 with 219 casualties reported after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' in the hill districts protested the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The Meiteis, constituting around 53 per cent of Manipur's population, reside predominantly in the Imphal Valley. The tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, who make up 40 per cent, primarily inhabit the hill districts. (PTI)

Shehbaz Sharif becomes Pakistan PM

slogans of 'Azaadi (freedom)' and Qaidi #804', a reference to incarcerated Imran Khan. Some of the PTI-backed lawmakers also held posters of Imran Khan.

In response to the pro-Imran slogans, PML-N lawmakers shouted 'long live Nawaz' and waved wristwatches at the opposition benches -- referring to the Toshakhana corruption case against Khan.

The PML-N party supremo Nawaz Sharif was the first person who voted for Shehbaz in the race for the election of the prime minister. Before the vote, the PTI said the graceful thing that PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif could have done was to accept defeat.

"...but he chose to live his life in shame. Every day will be worse than the previous one for these Coalition Of Losers, especially Nawaz Sharif & Maryam!" the party said in a post on X.

Shehbaz earlier served as prime minister of a coalition government from April 2022 to August 2023 before Parliament was dissolved to hold general elections.

In the February 8 polls, the Sharifs-led party failed to garner a clear majority, albeit technically, it is the largest party with 75 out of the 265 contested seats. Besides the PPP, Shehbaz was backed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Balochistan Awami Party, Pakistan Muslim League (Z), Istekham-e-Pakistan Party and the National Party. (PTI)

NE youths 'shoot' for responsible

herself, Banerji said the medium of film-making for story-telling is used by the fellows to tell untold stories of the land, people and generational knowledge. Bidisha Dey, executive director, Eicher Group Foundation, the CSR arm of Royal Enfield, said the Responsible Tourism Fellowship was conceived with the aim of bringing responsible tourism as an established practice across the Himalayas.

"The programme is led by community youth who are empowered to create local livelihood options by meaningfully engaging with their natural and cultural heritage. We believe this engagement plays a pivotal role in creating and promoting winning models for sustainable tourism," she added. (PTI)

Blenders Pride Introduces India's First Fashion Festival

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 3: Blenders Pride, known for its innovative approach to style, introduces Fashion NXT Festival, marking a milestone in India's fashion landscape. The festival aims to transcend traditional fashion events by offering a dynamic blend of style, music, and technology. Scheduled to debut in Pune and Bhubaneswar this March, Fashion NXT Festival promises to revolutionize the fashion scene with its diverse lineup of experiences. Partnering with renowned lifestyle brands, Blenders Pride ensures a unique and immersive journey for attendees. Among the festival's highlights are collaborations with trendsetting brands like Nasher Miles, All You Can Street, Beardo, MyGlam, and John Jacobs, offering fashion enthusiasts the opportunity to engage with cutting-edge accessories, streetwear, grooming services, and eyewear innovations. Exciting fashion showcases by acclaimed designers Nachiket Barve and Varun Bahl, featuring celebrities Sanya Malhotra and Aditi Rao Hydari, add a touch of glamour to the event.

IIFL Finance Launches 'Ladies First' Gold Loan Mela Campaign

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 3: IIFL Finance, a prominent non-banking finance company in India, unveils a groundbreaking initiative called the 'Ladies First' Gold Loan Mela Campaign, exclusively designed for women customers. The campaign, a first-of-its-kind in the industry, offers an array of benefits to women borrowers who avail gold loans from IIFL Finance branches across India between March 5 and March 12, 2024. Women customers participating in the campaign will receive an assured gift and enjoy zero processing fees on their gold loans. Additionally, IIFL Finance will award bumper prizes, including gold coins, to selected winners. As the second largest gold loan company in India in terms of loan assets, IIFL Finance recognizes the growing importance of women in entrepreneurship. Currently, over 25% of IIFL Finance's 85 lakh borrowers are women, a number that continues to rise as more women venture into entrepreneurship amid India's expanding economy. Gold loans have emerged as a vital tool for women entrepreneurs, facilitating their aspirations through accessible financing options. The campaign coincides

with International Women's Day celebrations on March 8, underscoring IIFL Finance's commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs. Saurabh Kumar, Head of Gold Loan Business at IIFL Finance, expresses enthusiasm for the initiative, inviting women entrepreneurs across India to leverage the discounted interest rates and assured gifts available at IIFL Finance branches.

Renowned for its transparent dealings with customers, IIFL Finance operates through 4,600 branches across India, embodying its business philosophy of 'Seedhi Baat.' The company regularly organizes gold loan melas throughout the year to engage with customers and offer attractive loan options and prizes as tokens of appreciation.

With over ₹ 77,000 crores in loan assets under management, IIFL Finance is one of India's largest retail-focused NBFCs. Its gold loan portfolio, standing at ₹ 24,692 crores as of December 31, 2023, reflects a robust year-on-year growth of 35%. IIFL Finance extends its gold loan services to salaried individuals, self-employed individuals, and MSMEs across 2,721 towns/cities in 25 states and Union Territories.



Leading fertiliser player IFFCO owns 49 per cent of Triumph Offshore IFFCO moves NCLT against Triumph Offshore, Swan Energy

NEW DELHI, March 3: IFFCO has moved the NCLT against Swan Energy Ltd (SEL) and their joint venture Triumph Offshore to restrain their JV firm from passing any resolution without its approval and issuing any share/security to the lenders against loans.

Seeking an injunction against

any such proposal, IFFCO, in its petition filed before the Ahmedabad bench of the NCLT, alleged that Triumph Offshore is pre-paying the debt, which may result in dilution of its shareholding in the joint venture firm and is detrimental to its interest.

IFFCO has moved the NCLT under sections 241 and 242 of the Companies Act 2013, alleging oppression and mismanagement.

It has prayed to restrain Swan Energy and Triumph Offshore "from passing any board resolution without the prior written approval of petitioner (IFFCO), with reference to the substitution of the bank term loan with promoters loan or from issuing any shares/security or any instrument convertible into equity in favour of R2 (SEL) or any third party, which may result in diluting shareholder of the petitioner".

Leading fertiliser player IFFCO owns 49 per cent of Triumph Offshore, the joint venture with Swan Energy, established to set up a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU).

Swan Energy Ltd (SEL) is the majority partner with a 51 per cent



stake.

Triumph Offshore's board comprises three nominees from Swan Energy, two from IFFCO and two independent directors.

According to IFFCO, Triumph Offshore had tied up with banks to get a term loan of Rs 1,604 crore, out of which SBI sanctioned Rs 500 crore. To secure the loan, the entire equity share capital held by IFFCO was mortgaged with lenders.

IFFCO has alleged that Triumph Offshore -- through its nominee directors and two independent directors -- "has worked in cohorts with R2 (SEL) to create a situation wherein R1 (Triumph) has been rendered in a state of financial crisis by using all cash reserves to hastily and needlessly pre-pay lenders' money.

Moreover, it has also not taken any steps to charter any Floating

Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) and the decision were taken by the directors "only to facilitate the intentions" of SEL to ultimately lead Triumph Offshore, where it becomes a necessity to accept the proposal if accepting the loan from SEL to restore JV's capacity to repay bank loans, it added.

It has prayed the National Company Law Tribunal to pass directions to Triumph Offshore and its employees from taking any loan from SEL or its affiliates without its written approval.

IFFCO in its petition submitted that Swan Energy on September 22, 2023, decided to call an extraordinary general meeting on October 19, 2023, to raise Rs 1,435.50 crore by issuing preferential issue of shares to a foreign entity GCP INAB PTE Ltd, Singapore. The issue price was proposed at around 60 per cent premium to the then market price.

Triumph Offshore called a board meeting with a shorter notice on October 10, 2023, to approve the proposal for making a rights issue of Rs 1,100 crore to SEL for replacing the bank loan with a promoter loan. (PTI)

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, MOHAMMAD RAFIKUL ISLAM, have corrected my name from MOHAMMAD RAFIQUK ISLAM to MOHAMMAD RAFIKUL ISLAM through the Chief Administrative Officer, District & Session Judge Court, Morigaon, Assam. MOHAMMAD RAFIKUL ISLAM and MOHAMMAD RAFIQUK ISLAM is the same and one person.

Mohammad Rafikul Islam
S/O Abdul Hamid
Village : Basundhari
PO : Nellie
PS : Jagiroad
District : Morigaon
Assam.

Morigaon DC takes firm stand against employee tardiness

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, March 3: The district commissioner of Morigaon, Devashish Sharma, took a firm stance against tardiness among employees in his office this Sunday. During a visit to the Commissioner's Office and neighbouring offices around 10:45 am, Sharma noted the absence of approximately 90 per cent of officers and staff, which he deemed unfortunate. Expressing his displeasure, he announced that half a day would be deducted from the regular leave of those who fail to report by 11 am.

Sharma emphasised the pivotal role of the District Commissioner's Office within the administration system and highlighted how irregular attendance and lack of punctuality can adversely affect the work culture. He lamented the tendency of some

individuals to avoid work despite being allocated office hours, noting its detrimental impact on service delivery and public access to government facilities.

Addressing the potential consequences of such absenteeism, Sharma stressed the importance of maintaining public trust in the district administration. He expressed regret over the situation, acknowledging his responsibility as commissioner. Sharma warned of legal repercussions for future instances of tardiness and announced his intention to personally inspect all government offices in the district to ensure compliance.

In closing, Sharma urged all officers and employees to uphold the standards of a healthy administration, underscoring the significance of their roles in serving the community.

Shyam Nishan Padayatra set to commence from Hojai to Nagaon

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, March 3: Sawariya Bhakat Mandal, Hojai, is going to organise the 'Shyam Nishan Padayatra' (footsteps procession) with a traditional procession on March 9 and 10. Pramod More and Rajesh Kejriwal have been appointed as the convenors of the Shyam Nishan Padayatra. Notably, as per the grace of the incarnation of God in this Kali Yuga, Baba Shyam, Sawariya Bhakat Mandal is going to organise a Nishan Padayatra (rally with a religious flag) to be offered to Baba Shyam) from Hojai's Laxminaryan Temple campus to Nagaon's Shyam Dham.

On March 9, early morning at 5:30, the ritual (puja) will begin at Laxminaryan Temple, and at 6:15 am, the Padayatra will start from Hojai for Nagaon's Shyam Dham temple followed by the 'Shyam Chariot' along with the devotees in traditional attire holding the Nishan (Shyam flag). On March 10, i.e., the next day, it will reach its destination in Nagaon in the evening. The 50-kilometer Padayatra will have six stoppages at Nilbag, Daboka, Jabrakhuwa, Nonoi, Kuthyatuli, Borghat, and during the procession, Shyam hymns will be sung by devotees. On March 9, the devotees will rest at a stoppage in Kuthyatuli overnight.

The members of Sawariya Bhakat Mandal have requested all the devotees of Baba Shyam to make this religious event successful by participating in large numbers. As per information, till now, 110 devotees from Hojai, Nagaon, Lanka, Guwahati, Kuthyatuli, Daboka, etc., have registered their names for the Nishan Padayatra. Devotees can register their names with Shyam devotees: Lalit Bora, Aman Kejriwal, Anita Bajaj, and Sangeeta Bhimsaria.

District Level Neighbourhood Youth Parliament organised in Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent

DONGKAMUKAM, March 3: The Nehru Yuva Kendra, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, orchestrated a District Level Neighbourhood Youth Parliament on Sunday at Adarsh Rastra Bhasa High School, Nawaibill, West Karbi Anglong.

Assistant professors Chhotelal Chauhan and Ashok Kr Chauhan delved into various government initiatives, including Jan Dhan Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, SVANidhi, Vocal for Local, Mann ki Baat, and shared empowering grassroots stories.

Dr Rajesh Kumar Chauhan, assistant professor, addressed the impact of women's reservation and empowerment through Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam, while Dr Shio Jee Chauhan, assistant professor, discussed poverty alleviation initiatives like PM Garib Kalyan Yojana. Jeetendra Harijan, vice principal of Kapili College, spoke on the vision of 'My Bharat-Viksit Bharat@2047'.

The winners of the essay writing competition, Parbati Chauhan (1st), Roshan Kumar Chauhan (2nd), and Priti Kumari (3rd), were honoured with certificates and cash prizes.

Key figures such as Amar Ch Das, accounts officer, Sanjit Harijan, EX NSV, Dhanraj Harijan, EX NSV, and Ashok Kr Singh, assistant teacher, ARB High School, were in attendance.

A floral tribute was paid, and a lamp was lit before Swami Vivekananda's photo. Saikot Mondal, district youth officer, NYK, delivered the aims and objectives of the meeting and guided the youth to register on the My Bharat Portal.

The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of over 200 individuals.

Scheme aims to empower urban women entrepreneurs, benefiting 2,500 SHG members in Kokrajhar

MLA Lawrence Islary distributes Mukhyamantri Udyamita Abhiyan forms

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 3: In a significant move to provide financial support to members of self-help groups (SHGs) statewide, a ceremony was held at the Kokrajhar Municipal Board Office complex in Kokrajhar on Sunday for the ceremonial distribution of application forms under the state government's flagship scheme, Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan - Ngoria, within the Kokrajhar Municipal Board (KMB) areas. This scheme aims to empower SHG members, particularly urban women, to become entrepreneurs and enhance their socio-economic status and living conditions.

The government's focus on promoting the welfare and development of SHG members in society has been underscored through initiatives like this. Kokrajhar East LAC MLA, Lawrence Islary, graced the event and distributed application forms to SHG members from urban areas in the presence of officials and ward commissioners.



Under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan - Ngoria scheme, 2.5 lakh women in urban municipal areas will receive assistance of Rs 10,000 each as entrepreneurship funds. In Kokrajhar, 2,500 SHG members across 10 wards under the Kokrajhar municipality area stand to benefit from

this scheme. The distribution of forms began on Sunday and will continue until March 5 at the Kokrajhar Municipality Board office complex. Completed forms will be collected on March 9, 10, and 11. MLA Islary commended the government's dedication to promoting women's

economic independence and entrepreneurship across the state through the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan - Ngoria. He praised both the state government and the BTR government for initiating this venture and fostering an encouraging environment for women's empowerment.

Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society hosts cane and bamboo crafts workshop

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 3: Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society, a leading voluntary organisation in the region, is organising a month-long design and technology development workshop on cane and bamboo crafts with the financial assistance of the Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. The workshop was formally inaugurated at the Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society Crafts Training Centre.

In the workshop, a total of 30 artisans from different parts of Sonitpur district are taking part. They are being imparted training on cane and bamboo crafts by Hariprasanna Saikia, an empanelled designer of Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, and Dhan Kumar Hazarika, master craftsman of cane and bamboo crafts, Tezpur.

While interacting with this correspondent, the activists of the NGO revealed that it would provide necessary assistance in enhancing the marketing of the products generated by the artisans in the next phase of the workshop. The workshop, scheduled to conclude on March 11, is expected to produce 20 models, and additionally, 50 improved toolkits of cane and bamboo crafts will be distributed to 50 selected artisans of cane and bamboo crafts from different parts of Sonitpur and Biswanath districts. Moreover, the trainees will be paid ₹ 300 per day at the end of the workshop.

The workshop, supervised by Rakesh Das, a senior member of the NGO, is also giving special focus on providing necessary assistance to the artisans so that they can produce world-class products after acquiring adequate knowledge through the workshop.

World Hearing Day celebrated with friendly match

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 3: On Sunday, World Hearing Day was celebrated under the theme 'Changing mindsets: Let's make ear and hearing care a reality for all' through a friendly match between students of Purvuttar Pratibandhi Pratisthan and Government Ayurvedic College & Hospital. The event, held at the college's field, showcased the power of sports in bridging gaps among individuals with diverse abilities. The match was jointly organised by Dr Jyotirmoy Sarmah and Dr Alakesh Mazumdar, department of Shalakyata Tantra, GACH, Guwahati.

J P Sahariah, principal, PIPWD, Guwahati, Dr Dhaneshwar Kalita, president, Purvuttar Pratibandhi Pratisthana and former principal, GACH, Guwahati, and Prof (Dr) Yanbeni Humtsoe, vice principal, GACH, Guwahati, were the guests of honour for the event and delivered their inaugural speeches. Students, faculties, and local residents gathered to express their unwavering support for both teams. Spectators cheered enthusiastically, creating an electric atmosphere. GACH emerged victorious by securing a 2-1 victory. The event concluded with a closing ceremony where participants were



honoured for their sportsmanship and spirit of togetherness. Jwngpu Borgoyary was honoured as the player of the match, and Askinas Hemborn was honoured as the best emerging player of the match.

Reflecting on the event, Jwngpu Borgoyary, a hearing-impaired student, expressed his joy at being part of such a memorable occasion. "It is a matter of immense honour and pleasure to be awarded as the best player of the match for the third time in a row. The entire team had a great time playing with the students of GACH."

Dr Jyotirmoy Sarmah, the organiser and HOD of Department of Shalakyata Tantra, mentioned, "This is the fourth time the Department of Shalakyata Tantra (ENT) is organ-

ising this friendly football match to encourage the hearing-impaired students on the occasion of World Hearing Day and reflect the college's commitment towards creating an empowering environment among the students through the spirit of sportsmanship."

The friendly football match was an attempt to provide a platform for the talents and potentials of individuals with diverse hearing abilities to come together, learn from each other, and celebrate their shared passion for sports with mutual respect and enthusiasm. By leveraging the match as a platform, the Shalakyata Department and Government Ayurvedic College & Hospital aimed at promoting hearing health and inclusivity within the locality and beyond.

Free health camp addresses rising health concerns in Tezpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 3: Tezpur MLA, Prithviraj Rabha, and Dr Manoj Mirdha, managing director of EMM Hospital inaugurated a day-long multi speciality medical camp organised in collaboration with EMM Hospital & Research Centre, Tezpur, and Rotary Club of Tezpur, by ARHI Hospital, Jorabat, at the premises of EMM Hospital on Saturday.

In the awareness camp, referring to the latest estimates released by the WHO cancer agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), it was reported that over 14.13 lakh new cancer cases and 9.16 lakh deaths occurred in 2022. This implies that 1 in nine people is likely to develop cancer in his/her lifetime, and the number is projected to increase to 15.7 lakh in 2025, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research National Cancer Registry Programme (ICMR-NCRP). The most common

cancers among Indian women were found to be breast, cervix, ovary, mouth, and colorectal, and among men are those of oral cavity, lung, esophagus, colorectal, and stomach. The increased incidence of cancer is attributed to increased smoking, alcohol use, and poor lifestyle. The prevalence of tobacco consumption in the north-east is higher at 45.7 percent compared to the national prevalence of 29 percent, and hence our north-eastern states have the highest burden of cancers.

Moreover, the patients present at the advanced stage and lack of awareness among the general population make things worse. A similar increasing trend is also seen in various other medical fields like cardiovascular diseases, orthopaedics, pain management, etc. In the prevailing scenario, to increase awareness among the general population, ARHI Hospital organised the multi-speciality free health camp.

Cotton College alumni group donates funds

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 3: Members of Cottonian82, an alumni group of Cotton College, visited 'Ashaneer', an orphanage for children with disabilities situated at Rupnagar, Guwahati, and handed over a cheque of ₹ 25,000 for the purchase of special mattresses for a child suffering from cerebral palsy. Members also interacted with the inmates, where the inmates performed songs and dances. The alumni group urged common citizens to come forward and support such organisations that are working selflessly for the underprivileged sections of society. Manabiyoti Das, secretary of Cottonian82, led the team and expressed satisfaction with the functioning of the orphanage.

Jal Jeevan Mission falls short of expectations

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, March 3: The Jal Jeevan Mission, an ambitious scheme aimed at providing water supply to every household, has faced significant challenges in the 83 number Margherita constituency of Tinsukia district, turning into a disappointing situation for the residents. Mohammed Toufik Khan, a noted social worker and vice president of the Margherita Block Congress Committee, highlighted the failure of the scheme located at Balukhad under ward no 5 of Margherita.

According to Khan, despite the completion of the project three years ago, the scheme has been unable to provide water to every household as intended. Despite the installation of pipes and water taps in all houses in the Balukhad area, the water supply remains inadequate. Khan attributes this failure to the inefficiency of the contractors and engineers involved in the project, resulting in the mismanagement of government funds totalling ₹ 62,15,117.

Khan likened the situation to the fable of the 'Hen that Lays Golden Eggs', suggesting that once the project was completed, the contractors and engineers disappeared from the site, leaving behind a dysfunctional water supply system. The Margherita Block Congress Committee has demanded an impartial inquiry by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Public Health Engineering Department minister Jayanta Mallabaruah into the matter, urging action against all those responsible for the failed implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission in Balukhad, ward no 5 of the Margherita constituency.

Commemorative speech on 'Psychology of Winning' held

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, March 3: Under the patronage of Birendra Nath Chetia Social Trust and in association with Demow Press Club, a commemorative speech on the topic 'Psychology of Winning' was organised in the auditorium of Demow College on Sunday. As per the schedule, the program started with the planting of saplings in memory of Birendra Nath Chetia, planted by Hamida Begum, retired HOD of Sociology department, Demow College. The earthen lamps in front of the photo of Birendra Nath Chetia were lit by Binod Borghain, retired teacher of Athabari Higher Secondary School, Arpana Chetia, wife of late Birendra Nath Chetia, and Demow Press Club members. The dignitaries were felicitated with a phulam gamosa in the program. Dr Pranjal Buragohain, associate professor of the Education department, Dibrugarh University, who was present at the program as the speaker, was felicitated with a phulam gamosa, book, and citation.

'Zikir Sadhana Bota' awarded to radio artist Idul Ali in Sivasagar



HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, March 3: The 'Zikir Sadhana Bota', instituted by Bagh Hazarika Jagaran Mancha, Assam, was presented to the noted radio artist Idul Ali on Sunday at

Sivasagar Press Club by the donor family of late Alhaz Akilur Rahman in the presence of educationist Hachna Ara Begum, poet Prema Gogoi, Suna Baba Ali, Tarun Chandra Nath, Zakir Hussain, Samsul Barik,

Manoj Kumar Borthakur, and members of the Bagh Hazarika Jagaran Mancha.

The working president of the Mancha, Punyeeswar Chetia, delivered the welcome address and said that Bagh Hazarika was an

integral part of the grand military garrison of Lachit Borpuhan in the Battle of Saraighat and hence should always be remembered. Inaugurating the meeting held on the occasion, Prema Gogoi lauded the effort of the Mancha in bringing about a new consciousness about our forgotten heroes.

The collection of articles 'Saraigur Sur' was released by Manoj Kumar Borthakur, the working president of the Assam State Journalists Union, besides delivering the keynote address. Borthakur spoke on the proximity of core principles of Islamic Sufism with the mystical spiritualism of Sanatan Hinduism. Samsul Barik, president of the Mancha and a noted writer, in his speech said that the Mancha observes the day to spread the message of harmony among the people of diverse faiths and customs. The meeting was also addressed by Sunababa Ali, Hachna Ara Begum, Assad Ullah, Naziulla Hazarika, and Ansar Uddin Bora. Idul Ali and his companions sang Jikir and Jari songs.

Kaliabor College conducts training program

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 3: The department of Computer Science, Kaliabor College, organised a 2-day long special training program on 'Emerging Trends in Technologies' with the support of the department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India, and IIT Roorkee within the college campus recently. The program was inaugurated by Pompi Baruah, vice principal, Kaliabor College, and was intended for female participants only with the major objective of enhancing their knowledge and providing exposure to the field of technological advancements along with improving their technical skills. Tapan Ch Nath, from IGNOU, Guwahati, and Narottam Bhattacharjee, research scholar, Tezpur University, imparted the training to the participants. Using ICT resources, the experts explained in depth about several advanced topics in the field of software, hardware, artificial intelligence, robotics, python, C++, Google Colab, etc., and conducted hands-on training sessions on developing basic and advanced programs using python language.

Moreover, the duo experts also highlighted the constructive use of social media in general and discussed the use of the popular LinkedIn app in particular for career diversification. Speaking in the valedictory session, Dr Uttam Kr Baruah, principal, Kaliabor College, lauded the department and the concerned agency for such an initiative in advancing students' awareness in the field of modern science and technology. He also expressed his keen interest in conducting similar programs in the near future. A total of 294 participants consisting of UG students and several faculty members actively participated in the entire program.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

It is legal because I wish it.
-Louis XIV

Debatable GDP growth

The recent GDP release by the National Statistical Office (NSO), revealing a surprising growth of 8.4% in the fourth quarter, has stirred both excitement and scepticism among economists and experts alike. While some view this as a testament to India's economic prowess, others question the validity of these figures, especially in the context of an impending general election. It's become customary for economists and commentators to engage in a game of projections and estimates, attempting to forecast future growth figures. However, the recent discrepancy between forecasts (ranging from 6% to 6.5%) and the actual GDP growth underscores the complexity of economic prediction. The scepticism surrounding NSO's calculations raises questions about the integrity of statistical data, particularly during election seasons. Critics argue that governments may manipulate economic indicators to bolster their political standing. Yet, amidst this debate, one cannot ignore the tangible signs of economic vibrancy evident in markets and everyday life. Indeed, the Indian economy appears to be thriving, with bustling markets and increased consumer spending. The narrative of the "Have-nots" seems to be fading, replaced by a more optimistic outlook on economic well-being. However, the true drivers of economic growth extend beyond government policies and statistical data. Historical examples, such as the impact of demonetization and the liberalization of the telecommunications sector, highlight the nuanced relationship between policy decisions and long-term economic outcomes.

Demonetization, while initially disruptive, ultimately led to a resurgence in the economy. Similarly, the liberalization of the telecommunications sector paved the way for India's IT revolution, demonstrating the importance of freeing up markets for innovation and growth. Moreover, the stability of India's fiscal framework, particularly with the implementation of GST, has provided a conducive environment for business operations. The shift towards a stable tax regime has been welcomed by industry experts, enabling better planning and investment decisions. Furthermore, the abolition of industrial licensing policies in the early 1990s unleashed the potential of Indian industry, fostering a culture of innovation and productivity gains. These reforms, though gradual, have contributed significantly to India's economic resilience. In evaluating economic performance, it is essential to recognize the cumulative impact of policies over time, rather than attributing gains to specific governments. Economic progress is a continuous process, shaped by a multitude of factors beyond political rhetoric.

Looking ahead, the guiding principle for economic policy-making should be to prioritise stability and avoid actions that could harm the economy. Like the Hippocratic Oath for physicians, policymakers must first do no harm, recognizing the interconnectedness of economic decisions and their far-reaching consequences. While debates over GDP figures may continue, the underlying resilience of the Indian economy remains undeniable. By fostering a stable fiscal environment, promoting market liberalization, and prioritizing long-term growth over short-term gains, India can sustain its momentum on the global stage.

Supreme Court all but kills holding Trump trials before Election Day

In a momentous and historic decision, the Supreme Court of the United States yesterday ruled that it will take the case in which the criminally indicted, convicted rapist Donald Trump claims immunity from any crime committed while he was president of the United States.

Few in the legal world expected them to take that case since it had already been thoroughly discussed and rejected by the Appeals Court in Washington DC. The justices used the excuse that they will rule on the supposedly narrower issue of whether Trump has "absolute immunity from criminal prosecution for conduct alleged to involve official acts during his tenure."

The outrage there is that it is Trump, of course, no one else, who is alleging that absurd position. One would expect he would make that claim in order to wiggle out of accountability for any of his crimes.

The former federal appellate judge and longtime conservative jurist, J. Michael Luttig, who testified before Congress, said he is essentially assuming the worst. He said on national television last night that he didn't think the Court would have taken this case unless at least some of the justices were accepting Trump's outrageous position.

The Supreme Court ruling all but insures that Trump may not come to trial for his crimes until after the election. Should he win, he could be expected to pardon himself. The justices are not hearing oral arguments

until April and with all the other trial preps that would be necessary, the Jack Smith case against Trump involving the attempt to overturn the election and the insurrection led by the ex-president would not come up until October 16, just two weeks before Election Day, after millions have already voted. What's worse, Trump is now asking all the other courts to put a hold on all the cases until after the Supreme Court rules. The whole matter amounts to a most extreme example of justice denied via justice delayed and a cabal of right wing judges determined to reward Trump delay tactics.

Even if the justices ruled that Trump did not have the immunity he claims he has it would be too late for him to be tried before Election Day and he could end up getting off the hook entirely if he wins the election. The crimes he committed that the Court ruling essentially could forgive include the inciting, aiding and abetting of the Trumpite Jan. 6, 2021 invasion and insurrection and attempted coup at the U.S. Capitol and, of course, the attempts to deprive the voters of the nation of their choice in that election.

The justices set oral arguments on Trump's immunity claim, which has already been strongly rejected in lower federal courts, for the week of April 22 and told both Trump's lawyers and Special Counsel Jack Smith to get their briefs in before then. Through all the court hearings, in D.C. and in



federal court in Florida as well, Trump has claimed that presidential absolute immunity from criminal prosecution extends to ex-presidents, too.

The hypocrisy is evident because Trump lawyers had argued during federal court in Florida as well, Trump has claimed that presidential absolute immunity from criminal prosecution extends to ex-presidents, too.

Trump's immunity claim. "It's equally unimaginable to me the former president will be tried before the election in November."

Luttig added "there must be some dissent on the court about whether the president—this president—has absolute immunity for the offenses for which he has been charged by Jack Smith."

Prosecutor Smith maintains that ordering and abetting an insurrection is not "an official duty" immune from prosecution. It's a campaign act and a political act, the special counsel consistently says. Asked to speculate which justices would give absolute immunity to Trump, Luttig declined. He stoutly reiterated, though, that "if there's one thing he can never remain immune for, it's for his at-

tempt to overturn the 2020 election and remain in power beyond the constitutionally prescribed four years.

"If the Supreme Court can hold that the former president is immune from prosecution even for that, then I don't know what to say," Luttig concluded.

If Trump, the current leader in the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, wins the election he could fire Smith after the Jan. 20, 2025 inauguration. Then Trump also could order his handpicked Justice Department toadies to go into Judge Chutkan's court in D.C. and drop the whole case.

Trump has also vowed to pardon everyone Smith indicts and/or convicts and everyone already in jail for carrying out or participating in the insurrection.

Another federal criminal case against Trump might also now be further delayed or dropped, the one for purloining secret classified documents—including a Pentagon plan to make war on Iran and data on how many nuclear missiles each submarine carries—from the White House to his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee in South Florida, has been slow-walking that case. The day before the High Court's ruling, Trump's lawyers asked Judge Cannon to drop it entirely, using the same perpetual immunity reasoning.

And not only is Judge Chutkan's trial with a jury stalled, so is any ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals

for the District of Columbia, one level below the Supreme Court. It had left the whole case, against the first former president to be criminally prosecuted, in her hands.

Despite the High Court's ruling, Trump still faces many legal tangles. New York State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron in Manhattan ruled he committed massive and constant fraud on New York, his bankers and Westchester County in his land deals for the Trump Organization, the family firm. Justice Engoron ordered Trump to pay \$355 million personally and Trump, his sons and the firm to pay \$464 million combined to the state.

Trump's lawyers told state Appellate Judge Anil Singh on February 28 Trump lacks enough ready cash to post the court's \$100 million bond. Judge Singh then ordered Trump to pay the full amount, but let him seek loans for it. For such loans, banks often add a 20% service charge, in case of default. And Trump, in prior bankruptcies, racked up defaults.

Besides the federal trials in D.C.—now delayed again—and Florida, also stalled, Trump faces three dozen counts of conspiracy and racketeering to steal Georgia's 2020 electoral votes. And a criminal trial of Trump for violating New York campaign finance laws by charging a \$125,000 hush money payment to former sex film star Stormy Daniels begins March 25. Overall, Trump faces at least 91 counts in separate trials in separate courts. (IPA Service)

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Hate speech is top emerging concern for Lok Sabha election 2024

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Election Commission of India (ECI) must take note of India Hate Lab report's terming 2024 a "critical year" for hate speech in India, on account of Lok Sabha Election 2024, and must rise to the occasion to rein in political players, especially the ruling BJP and its top leaders, since the past experience shows that reining in opposition leaders and parties have always been easier. Opposition parties have always been alleging that ECI takes sides with the ruling establishment while it takes prompt action against the opposition leaders.

By now it is a well-known fact that PM Narendra Modi and RSS-BJP clan are trying to establish a total political domination in the country. They are trying to win Lok Sabha Election 2024 with unprecedented majority, which they say "400 paar" (over 400). Many of the BJP leaders and their supporters have been increasing the communal pitch since they believe they could achieve their target by doing so. Their belief rests on the experience of the past three decades. BJP's rise is also attributed to the hate speech of the RSS-BJP clan, and the incidence of winning constituencies are said to be directly proportional to the number of events of hate speech they deliver.

Therefore, India Hate Lab, the Washington DC-based research group run by a dedicated team of journalists, academicians and researchers, report should not be simply brushed aside. Rather it should serve us as reminder that communal divide in the last 10 years has unprecedentedly risen in the country triggering communal unrest and violence in large scale, across the country. India is undergoing tense socio-political-religious environment under which free and fair election seems to be unattainable. Money and muscle power, and the hurdles officially and legally created for opposition, are additional concerns.

The report has documented 668 instances of hate speech events in 2023 in 18 states and 3 Union Territories of India, out of those 453 were occurred in BJP ruled states which is around 68 per cent of all events. Most instances occurred in Maharashtra (118), Uttar Pradesh (108), Haryana (48), Uttarakhand (41), Karnataka (40), Gujarat (31), Chhattisgarh (21) and Bihar (10). It should be noted that these states have altogether 256 Lok Sabha seats, out of which BJP had bagged 177 seats in the Lok Sabha election 2019.

ECI must try to find out the pattern of the number of hate speech events and their direct correlation to the election outcomes, so that it would help them to take effective action in reigning in such events during the Lok Sabha Election campaigns 2024. It should also be seen in a bigger perspective, since hate speeches have been common in other states too, such as Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and also the National Capital Territory Delhi. To rise to the occasion, the ECI should strengthen its mechanism and put in place during the election campaigns.

Moreover, ECI would need to show courage to take prompt action against anyone violating the Model Code of Conduct irrespective of the political parties in power or opposition.

However, it would not be a small task, as the report indicates that there are increasing evidences suggesting a link between hate speech events, a spike in communal tension and violence, and a phenomenon more sophisticatedly manifested through the widespread use of social media. There is an "alarming trend" suggesting a persistent and potential escalation of hate speech.

The report has warned that there appears to be international efforts to create religious polarisation in Maharashtra. In Uttar Pradesh, the report said that CM Yogi Adityanath has been instigating hate speech instances. Hindu right-wing groups have stoked tensions in Haryana. Uttarakhand witnessed several hate speech events, in which a Hindu religious preacher said that construction of mosques would not be allowed in the state, and it was said in presence of the Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama.

Several organisations also organised hate speeches. As many as 216 events were organised by VHP, including its youth wing Bajrang Dal, 77 were attributed to Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal. A total 50 hate speech events are attributed to BJP itself, often in the context of election rallies. In BJP ruled states, 10.6 per cent of hate speeches were delivered by BJP leaders. In non-BJP ruled states, BJP leaders delivered 27.6 per cent hate speeches.

These are but only few of the examples, involving the ruling BJP and their omission and commission in reigning in hate speech events. It is in this context, ECI will have tough time to rein them in during the election campaigns. More so because ECI has in the past said that there is no specific law directly addressing hate speech during election.

However, ECI relies on existing legal provisions to address the issue, which includes the provision under Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Representation of Peoples Act (RP Act). What is needs is the prompt action under these two legislations which may help the ECI to ensure that leaders of political parties refrain from making such statements that could create disharmony among different sections of society.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC) must be strictly enforced. ECI can take strict action, including advisories, prohibition from political campaigning, or even initiate criminal complaints against repeat offenders. ECI must take advantage of some judicial precedents. The Supreme Court of India has emphasized that ECI should assume more responsibility in matters of hate speech during election campaigns.

It should be noted that in Abhiram Singh case, the Supreme Court has ruled that any appeal to vote based on religion, caste, race, or community would amount to corrupt practice under RP Act. However, the question is, can ECI show courage to act against hate speeches and deploy stronger mechanism to rein in the menace? (IPA Service)

French President Macron defends increased supplies of weapons from EU to Ukraine

By Arun Kumar Shrivastav

On a recent visit to Sweden, French President Emmanuel Macron made a stop at Lund University, engaging in a lively Q&A session with students. The discussion delved into diverse topics, offering insights into his views on critical issues facing Europe and beyond.

Macron was recently in India as the Chief Guest at the 75th Republic Day. But we never had the opportunity to hear him speak on issues of common interest. We also missed out totally on the French First Lady Brigitte Marie-Claude Macron, who perhaps did not accompany the French President on his India tour.

Or did she? At least, this columnist is not able to verify this from available information on the internet. When Macron fell in love with his drama teacher, he was 15 and she was 39. When Macron became the President, he was 39, and the youngest President in the history or France. Their unusual personal life is as much of interest as the leadership quality of Macron.

But thanks to what we are, we could never get the French President in a Q&A session, where some of these details could be further unraveled. While we all human beings are equal and shaped by our individual circumstances, our actions represent what we are finally.

More than the individuals, it's their action and achievements that matter. Sometimes, failings too make you great. Let's remember Mirza Ghalib who was both drunkard and bankrupt. But what he wrote is still recited and relished.

At the Lund University Q&A session Macron acknowledged the significant changes looming on the horizon, citing upcoming elections across Europe and notably, the US presidential election.

He cautioned against vulnerabilities like manipulated elections and rising dis-

information, particularly through social media. Russia's role in destabilizing the continent, through both the war in Ukraine and cyberwarfare, was highlighted as a major concern.

He also expressed worries about the growing disregard for the rule of law in some countries, emphasizing its fundamental importance to a functioning democracy.

Founded in 1666, Lund University boasts over 45,000 students and thrives on understanding, explaining, and improving our world.

Renowned for its diverse course offerings and cross-disciplinary research, it attracts students and partners from 75 countries. With world-leading facilities like MAX IV and the upcoming ESS, Lund fosters innovations in materials, life sciences, and more.

Its new Science Village further cements its position as a global hub for research, education, and progress. Immerse yourself in a vibrant academic community striving to shape a better future.

Lund University's innovative spirit shines through its centuries-long legacy. From medical breakthroughs like ultrasound and the artificial kidney to modern conveniences like Bluetooth and water-saving showers, their discoveries touch diverse aspects of our lives.

Beyond technology, they've revolutionized healthcare with dopamine research for Parkinson's and popularized wellness practices like Swedish massage.

Whether it's promoting gut health with ProViva yogurt or pioneering electric roads, Lund's innovations consistently seek to improve our world, solidifying their place as a global leader in impactful research and development.

When questioned about the EU's ability to compete with other models, particularly in innovation and technology, Macron remained optimistic. He acknowledged the challenges posed by the

EU's 27-member structure compared to more unified competitors like the US and China.

However, he urged for increased investment, faster synchronization, and financial commitment to avoid dependence on these powers. He stressed the crucial role of universities, startups, and companies in achieving this technological prowess.

The war in Ukraine dominated the student inquiries, eliciting strong condemnation from Macron towards Russia's actions. He emphasized the EU's vital role in supporting Ukraine and preventing a Russian victory.

He acknowledged the ongoing efforts in providing weapons and financial aid, urging further escalation of this support. He also welcomed Ukraine's initiation of EU membership negotiations, viewing it as a positive step.

On a lighter note, when asked about his ideal guest for a future Studenttafton event, Macron surprised everyone by naming Swedish Physics Nobel Prize winner Anne L-Huillier. He lauded her as a symbol of the Swedish-French cooperation and praised her intellectual contributions to the research community.

Meanwhile, in a pathbreaking research at Lund University, researchers have identified 13 new biomarkers that significantly improve the prediction of heart disease risk among diabetics.

This breakthrough, born from analyzing thousands of studies, could lead to better risk assessment and management for diabetics, who are twice as likely to develop heart problems.

One particularly promising marker, NT-proBNP, already used for heart failure, showed a strong link to heart disease risk in diabetic patients. While further testing is needed, these findings offer hope for more personalized medicine and potentially changing the standard of care for diabetic heart health. (IPA Service)

POST BAG

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Sir/Ma'am

Charaideo Maidams are slated to be Assam's third UNESCO World Heritage Site after Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park got the coveted tag almost 40 years ago in 1985. Charaideo Maidams are just the tip of the iceberg in a culture-rich Assam where every corner speaks history. Assam's rich history has always been out in the cold but now it is receiving all the fanfare and the attention of the larger national populace. The Ahoms were invaders but instead of ravaging the cultural landscape or imposing their culture, they enriched the Assamese culture which was in its nascent stage. Assam is because of Ahoms and we are forever grateful that they chose Assam as their kingdom. I humbly urge the government of Assam and the Union Ministry of Culture to nominate many such worthy sites like Majuli, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Dehing Patkai National Park, Rock Cut Cave in Bongaigaon, Bamuni Hills in Tezpur, and many others for the UNESCO World Heritage site tag so that Assam gets its due importance that it has been long denied off.

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What causes back pain and can it be cured?

By: Sarah Wallwork & Lorimer Moseley

Back pain is common. One in thirteen people have it right now and worldwide a staggering 619 million people will have it this year. Chronic pain, of which back pain is the most common, is the world's most disabling health problem. Its economic impact dwarfs other health conditions.

If you get back pain, how long will it take to go away? We scoured the scientific literature to find out. We found data on almost 20,000 people, from 95 different studies and split them into three groups:

- **acute** – those with back pain that started less than six weeks ago
- **subacute** – where it started between six and 12 weeks ago
- **chronic** – where it started between three months and one year ago.

We found 70%-95% of people with acute back pain were likely to recover within six months. This dropped to 40%-70% for subacute back pain and to 12%-16% for chronic back pain.

Clinical guidelines point to graded return to activity and pain education under the guidance of a health professional as the best ways to promote recovery. Yet these effective interventions are underfunded and hard to access.

Injury, pain

Most acute back pain episodes are not caused by serious injury or disease. There are rare exceptions, which is why it's wise to see your doctor or physio, who can check for signs and symptoms that war-



rant further investigation. But unless you have been in a significant accident or sustained a large blow, you are unlikely to have caused much damage to your spine.

Even very minor back injuries can be brutally painful. This is, in part, because of how we are made.

If you think of your spinal cord as a very precious asset (which it is), worthy of great protection (which it is), a bit like the crown jewels, then what would be the best way to keep it safe? Lots of protection and a highly sensitive alarm system.

The spinal cord is protected by strong bones, thick ligaments, powerful muscles and a highly effective alarm system (your nervous system). This alarm system can trigger pain that is so unpleasant that you cannot possibly think of, let alone do, anything other than seek care or avoid movement.

The messy truth is that when pain persists, the pain system becomes more sensitive, so a widening array of things contribute to pain. This pain system hypersensitivity is a result of neuroplasticity – your nervous system is becoming

better at making pain. Reduce chance of lasting pain Whether or not your pain resolves is not determined by the extent of injury to your back. We don't know all the factors involved, but we do know there are things that you can do to reduce chronic back pain:

- understand how pain really works. This will involve intentionally learning about modern pain science and care. It will be difficult but rewarding. It will help you work out what you can do to change your pain
- reduce your pain system sensitivity. With guidance, patience and persistence, you can learn how to gradually retrain your pain system back towards normal.

Pain sensitivity

Learning about "how pain works" provides the most sustainable improvements in chronic back pain. Programmes that combine pain education with graded brain and body exercises (gradual increases in movement) can reduce pain system sensitivity and help you return to the life you want.

These programmes have been in development for years, but high-

quality clinical trials are now emerging and it's good news: they show most people with chronic back pain improve and many completely recover.

But most clinicians aren't equipped to deliver these effective programmes – good pain education is not taught in most medical and health training degrees. Many patients still receive ineffective and often risky and expensive treatments, or keep seeking temporary pain relief, hoping for a cure.

When health professionals don't have adequate pain education training, they can deliver bad pain education, which leaves patients feeling like they've just been told it's all in their head. Community-driven not-for-profit organisations such as Pain Revolution are training health professionals to be good pain educators and raising awareness among the general public about the modern science of pain and the best treatments.

Pain Revolution has partnered with dozens of health services and community agencies to train more than 80 local pain educators and supported them to bring greater understanding and improved care to their colleagues and community.

But a broader system-wide approach, with government, industry and philanthropic support, is needed to expand these programmes and fund good pain education. To solve the massive problem of chronic back pain, effective interventions need to be part of standard care, not as a last resort after years of increasing pain, suffering and disability. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Skipping breakfast to reach class on time? Here's your sign to stop (and eat)



By: Surbhi Singh

Do you feel drowsy and tired throughout the day? Do you get frustrated with yourself for being unable to focus on your studies or work despite your best efforts?

You are not alone. Mansi, a 23-year-old student pursuing her master's degree at Amity University, was the same not long ago.

Speaking to FIT, Mansi says that despite her strict exercise regime, she often found herself feeling frustrated and exhausted. She desired to excel at academics and also to achieve her dream physique, but all her efforts seemed futile.

It was only when she consulted a nutritionist that Mansi understood that she had been missing a key element all along. "Ever since I was in college, I would skip breakfast, sometimes even skip meals and go on just fruit diet for days. I had the perception that eating less would make me healthy and thin. Moreover, because I was exercising regularly, I figured I was being healthy."

When her nutritionist asked her to start by incorporating a balanced breakfast into her daily meal plan, Mansi says she was sceptical. "First, I thought, 'What could a simple breakfast do if exercise, gym, and yoga couldn't?'"

"But then, I decided to give it a try, and I'm glad that I did. A simple, nutritious breakfast was the starting point for my fitness journey. It's true what they say—you often find solutions in things you underestimate." - Mansi, 23.

As Mansi adopted healthier eating habits, she noticed gradual but significant changes in her body and mind.

She says her energy levels skyrocketed, she felt sharper, and her concentration improved allowing her to power through her classes. Working out became easier too, and she started seeing results sooner than before.

Can the simple addition of breakfast to your meal plan do all this?

How does skipping breakfast affect students?

According to Dr Anshu Gupta, a dietician based in Gurgaon, skipping breakfast or opting for nutrient-poor choices can have detrimental effects on students' academic performance.

"Research consistently shows that students who eat a nutritious breakfast perform better academically than those who do not." - Dr Anshu Gupta.

Moreover, Dr Gupta emphasises the link between breakfast habits and overall health outcomes.

Individuals who regularly skip breakfast are at a higher risk of developing chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular issues. By prioritizing breakfast as a non-negotiable part of their daily routine, students can support their long-term health and academic success.

Health & flavour, all in one: What's up with fermented foods?

She goes on to emphasize the profound impact of a balanced breakfast on students' overall well-being and academic performance.

She explains that a well-rounded breakfast sets the stage for success in the classroom by providing essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, protein, healthy fats, and fibre, which fuel both the body and mind, enhancing cognitive function, concentration, and memory retention.

'What you have for breakfast matters'

Speaking to FIT, Dr Shilpa Arora, an independent nutritionist based in Gurgaon, brings attention to the prevalence of ready-to-eat processed foods and their potential side effects.

"In our fast-paced world, finding time to prepare a healthy breakfast can be challenging. As a result, many individuals turn to ready-to-eat foods available in the market, often marketed as nutritious and healthy alternatives."

However, Dr Arora warns against the deceptive nature of these processed foods. While they may seem convenient, ready-to-eat processed foods are often laden with preservatives, artificial additives, and high levels of sodium and sugar, she cautions. Consuming these foods regularly can have detrimental effects on our health, including weight gain, increased risk of chronic diseases, and poor overall nutrition.

"While it may require some extra effort, investing in wholesome ingredients and preparing simple, nutritious meals at home is essential for our long-term health and well-being. Ultimately, there is no shortcut to good nutrition, and it's worth making the time for." - Dr Shilpa Arora, a nutritionist.

When you have breakfast matters too. "Maintaining breakfast between 9-10:30 is crucial as the body utilizes glucose

from dinner overnight," says Deepthi Khatuja, Chief Clinical Nutritionist at Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurgaon.

Dr Arora also emphasizes the importance of consistency in healthy eating habits.

"Having a nutritious breakfast is essential, but it's not a free pass to indulge in junk food for the rest of the day," she says.

Consuming junk food regularly, regardless of whether you've had a healthy breakfast, can still lead to negative health outcomes. It's crucial to maintain a balanced diet throughout the day, incorporating whole foods and minimizing processed and unhealthy options.

Dr Arora further underscores the need for a holistic approach to nutrition, where each meal contributes to overall health and well-being.

She says, "Our bodies thrive on a diverse array of nutrients from whole foods. By prioritizing nutrient-rich options throughout the day, we can support our energy levels, cognitive function, and long-term health goals."

Is coffee enough to start your day right?

Many students and even working professionals turn to coffee to feel alert and focused as they start their day. However, having coffee is not enough, say experts. Dr Anu Gupta, a dietician at Miracle Hospital in Gurgaon, stresses the importance of not relying solely on coffee to kickstart the day.

Starting the day with tea or coffee may provide a temporary energy boost due to caffeine. However, relying on these beverages as a substitute for a balanced breakfast can lead to several negative consequences.

Dr Gupta highlights that while caffeine may offer a short-term energy surge, it does not provide the essential nutrients needed to sustain energy levels throughout the day.

"Without proper nourishment, the body's energy levels can quickly crash, leading to feelings of fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating," she warns.

While busy schedules may make it tempting to reach for quick-fix options or rely on caffeine for a boost, the long-term consequences of neglecting proper nutrition can be significant.

"Excessive caffeine consumption can disrupt sleep patterns, exacerbate stress levels, and contribute to long-term health issues such as adrenal fatigue and gastrointestinal problems." - Dr Anu Gupta.

Dr Gupta's recommends simple yet nutritious breakfast options:

Overnight oats topped with fruits and nuts: Rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

Greek yogurt with granola and honey: Provides protein, complex carbohydrates, and antioxidants.

Whole grain toast with avocado and a boiled egg: Contains essential omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and vitamins for sustained energy.

Deepthi Khatuja adds, "For time-strapped students, opting for protein-rich foods like nuts, sprouts, paneer, and milk over processed foods is feasible."

However, she says, solely relying on protein-rich foods can lead to bloating; thus, a balanced diet with sufficient fiber is essential.

Incorporating these simple yet nutritious breakfast ideas can help start your day on the right track, providing essential nutrients for sustained energy and vitality.

'Wholesome breakfast need not mean heavy breakfast'

In the quest for a healthy lifestyle, understanding the significance of balanced meal planning is paramount. Dr Anshu Gupta, a distinguished dietician based in Gurgaon, addresses prevalent misconceptions surrounding the heaviness of breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Contrary to popular belief, she highlights that breakfast need not be excessively heavy to sustain energy levels throughout the day. According to her, all meals should be balanced and tailored to individual energy requirements.

"This means that breakfast, lunch, and dinner should all be substantial enough to provide adequate nourishment without being overly heavy or excessive." - Dr Anshu Gupta.

Moreover, Dr Gupta acknowledges that meal timing and composition can vary based on individual preferences and lifestyle factors.

"Some people may prefer a larger meal in the morning, while others may find it more beneficial to have a lighter breakfast and a larger lunch or dinner," she notes. "Ultimately, it's about finding what works best for your body and ensuring that each meal contributes to overall health and well-being." (Courtesy: The Quint)

13 possible psoriasis complications

By: Susan Bard

Psoriasis is a lifelong, autoimmune inflammatory disease. It often appears as a skin condition, but it is a systemic condition that can affect many parts of the body.

There are many different types of psoriasis, and it is a complex condition.

As scientists learn more about inflammatory conditions and how they affect people, they are also establishing more links between conditions that have different diagnoses.

In addition, psoriasis poses lifestyle challenges that can be difficult to cope with. This can lead to additional symptoms, such as depression.

Due to various factors — including disparities in access to treatment, and the non-red colour of the psoriasis plaques — it may take longer for people with black or brown skin to receive medical attention for psoriasis. This may delay the start of treatment and increase the risk of experiencing complications.

Celiac disease

People with psoriasis are more likely to have antibodies for celiac disease, suggesting that there may be a link between the two.

Celiac disease affects around 1% of the general population, but it may be present in up to 4.3% of those with psoriasis.

People with celiac disease can experience a severe reaction when they consume gluten.

Both celiac disease and psoriasis appear to stem from dysfunction in the immune system. Some people find that avoiding gluten helps to reduce the symptoms of psoriasis.

Researchers who published a review of studies in the Archives of Dermatology in 2017 suggested a number of conditions that are common in people with psoriasis may indicate a link with the gastrointestinal system.

The authors of a review published in 2014 concluded that a gluten-free diet may help some people with psoriasis. But they called for more research to confirm a link.

People with psoriasis who are considering giving up gluten should talk with a doctor first, as whole grains can contain valuable nutrients, and a gluten-free diet may not be suitable for everyone.

Mouth problems

Some studies have suggested that people with psoriasis are more likely to develop problems with mucous membranes in the oral cavity, such as fissures in the tongue and lesions in the gums and cheeks.

Scientists have not established a specific link between psoriasis and oral problems, but research suggests that tongue fissures, for example, appear to be more common in those with psoriasis. Why they occur together also remains unclear.

Psoriasis and mouth problems could stem from similar genetic factors, or they might result from exposure to similar triggers, such as stress and alcohol.

Inflammatory bowel disease

Scientists have looked at possible links between psoriasis and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), Crohn's disease, and ulcerative colitis.

Studies have suggested that people with psoriasis and their family members may be more susceptible to these conditions.

Psoriasis and IBD have various genetic factors in common.

Vitamin D deficiency

Studies have found that vitamin D deficiency is often present at the onset of some autoimmune diseases.

Some experts recommend taking vitamin D supplements to reduce the symptoms of psoriasis.

One observational study involving 561 people, of whom 170 had psoriasis, found that people with psoriasis had significantly lower levels of vitamin D than those without the condition.

This study took place in South Italy, and all of the participants were white. The researchers suggested that vitamin D levels could impact the length of time symptoms last.

But they note that the association between vitamin D and psoriasis is "controversial."

Another study published in 2018 looked at 61 people with psoriasis, and 61 people without, in a hospital in Deralakatte, south India. The researchers found no correlation between vitamin D

levels and the severity of psoriasis symptoms in the two groups.

Cancer

Some studies have indicated that psoriasis may increase the risk of cancer overall and also some specific types of cancer, including oral, esophageal, liver, and pancreatic cancer.

One reason may be the use of systemic medications in treatment. These drugs affect the whole body.

Other underlying reasons may include genetic factors and the impact of psoriasis on the individual's lifestyle. More research is necessary to confirm a link.

Metabolic syndrome

Among people with psoriasis, there is a higher risk of some of the symptoms of metabolic syndrome, including heart problems, diabetes, fatty liver disease, and obesity.

Experts do not know what might link these conditions with psoriasis. There may be Trusted Source common genetic factors, they may share similar environmental triggers, or there may be a combination of reasons.

People with moderate to severe psoriasis should undergo testing for these conditions so that they can receive preventive treatment if necessary.

Body temperature regulation

Some types of psoriasis can affect body temperature regulation. This can have an impact on internal organs, such as the heart and the kidneys, according to the National Psoriasis Foundation.

The skin is important for keeping the body temperature stable, and problems that affect the skin can also affect temperature, especially with more severe forms, such as erythrodermic and pustular psoriasis.

Pustular psoriasis

Pustular psoriasis is a severe form of psoriasis that can appear in people who already have psoriasis.

One type, known as Zumbusch psoriasis, can lead to severe erythroderma and skin scaling.

In a 2015 case study of a person with pustular psoriasis, researchers noted that the condition can increase the risk of the following life threatening complications:

- pneumonitis, or lung inflammation
 - heart failure
 - hepatitis, or inflammation of the liver
- The person who was the focus of the study had the following symptoms:
- pustular skin lesions
 - pitted nail beds
 - fever and chills
 - muscle weakness
 - a rapid heartbeat
 - tremor
 - difficulty breathing
 - an over-accumulation of fluids, or edema
- A person with pustular psoriasis may need to spend time in the hospital until treatment normalizes their fluid levels, chemical balances, heart function, and skin condition.

Psoriatic arthritis

Up to 30% of people with psoriasis may develop psoriatic arthritis (PsA). It usually appears between the ages of 30–50 years.

While 85% of people with this condition first have skin symptoms, it can occur before or without dermatological symptoms.

- Symptoms include:
- fatigue
 - pain and swelling over the tendons
 - swollen fingers and toes
 - reduced mobility
 - stiffness and pain in one or more joints
 - pitted nails that may look as if they have a nail fungus
 - uveitis, a type of eye inflammation
- There are also different types of PsA, including:
- spondylitis, which affects the spine
 - enthesitis, which occurs where the ligaments or tendons meet the bones
 - dactylitis, which affects the fingers and toes
- Anyone with psoriasis who has joint pain or stiffness should talk with their doctor. Early treatment can reduce the risk of permanent joint damage.

Complications

Eye problems: According to the National Psoriasis Foundation, people with PsA are more likely

to develop uveitis, an inflammatory eye disease.

Hearing loss: A 2014 Spanish study looked at the risk of hearing loss in 60 people with PsA and 60 people without PsA.

The researchers found that 60% of those with PsA had some degree of hearing loss, compared with only 8.3% of those without the condition. They concluded that PsA may lead to damage in the inner ear.

Eye complications

Eye complications, such as uveitis, are associated with psoriatic arthritis. But research suggests that 7–20% of people with psoriasis have uveitis, and some people may have more than one eye problem.

People with psoriasis may experience the following eye complications:

- conjunctivitis
- dry eye
- episcleritis
- blepharitis
- cataracts
- corneal lesion

People with psoriasis should see an eye doctor for regular checkups.

Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder that affects the brain. This disease causes chronic inflammation in the neuronal tissue, eventually causing gait issues, balance problems, and tremors.

People with psoriasis may be more at risk of developing Parkinson's disease because of the inflammation in the neuronal tissue.

Kidney disease

Chronic kidney disease appears to be more common among people with psoriasis.

Scientists reporting in 2016 described this as "logical," because psoriasis has links with cardiovascular disease, and kidney disease shares the same risk factors.

In addition, the treatments people use for psoriasis are likely to have a toxic effect on the kidneys.

Psychological and emotional consequences

Living with psoriasis can be difficult, and it can have emotional and social consequences.

In a review published in Dermatology and Therapy in 2013, researchers describe psoriasis as a "common, long-term skin condition associated with high levels of psychological distress and considerable life impact."

People who have visible lesions may feel embarrassed by their appearance. This can lead to isolation, depression, and anxiety.

This can affect areas of life such as:

- relationships
- employment
- leisure and social activities

But there may also be physiological reasons for the psychological impact of psoriasis.

Scientists have found evidence of adrenal and pituitary involvement, which could lead to a hormonal imbalance.

This imbalance could impact both the skin and the psychological well-being of a person with psoriasis.

Stress and worry, in turn, can make symptoms worse.

Anyone with psoriasis who is experiencing signs of depression or low mood should talk with a doctor about their concerns.

As doctors increasingly come to understand the mental health challenges that people with psoriasis face, more effective treatment will hopefully become available.

Psoriasis is a complex condition with a wide range of possible complications and comorbidities.

When a person is familiar with the possible problems that can arise, it will be easier for them to explain to their doctor how they feel and to seek help.

Getting an early diagnosis for psoriasis may also help prevent some complications. An early diagnosis can lead to prompt treatment, which may be more effective in managing the condition. Anyone who believes they may have psoriasis should speak to a healthcare professional.

Treatment is available that can help to reduce many of the symptoms and complications of psoriasis and to improve a person's quality of life. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

Political signals ahead of the National People's Congress suggest that Xi is relatively unperturbed by China's recent market troubles

China's major political meeting of the year gets underway

BELJING, March 3: One burning issue dominates as the 2024 session of China's legislature gets underway this week: the economy.

The National People's Congress annual meeting, which opens Tuesday, is being closely watched for any signals on what the ruling Communist Party might do to reenergise an economy that is sagging under the weight of expanded government controls and the bursting of a real-estate bubble.

That is not to say that other issues won't come up. Proposals to raise the retirement age are expected to be a hot topic, the state-owned Global Times newspaper said last week. And China watchers will parse the annual defense budget and the possible introduction of a new foreign minister.

But the economy is what is on most people's minds in a country that may be at a major turning point after four decades of growth that propelled China into a position of economic and geopolitical power. For many Chinese, the failure of the post-COVID economy to rally strongly last year is shaking a long-held confidence in the future.

The National People's Congress is largely ceremonial in that it doesn't have any real power to decide on legislation. The deputies do vote, but it's become a unanimous or near-unanimous formalising of decisions that have been made by Communist Party leaders behind closed doors.

The congress can be a forum to propose and discuss ideas. The nearly 3,000 deputies are chosen to represent various groups, from government officials and party members to farmers and migrant workers. But Albert Wu, an expert on governance in China, believes that role has been eroded by the centralisation of power under Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

"Everyone knows the signal is the top," said Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore and a former journalist in China. "Once the top says something, I say something. Once the top keeps silent, I also keep silent."

Nonetheless, the reports and speeches during the congress can give indications of the future direction of government policy. And



while they tend to be in line with previous announcements, major new initiatives have been revealed at the meeting, such as the 2020 decision to enact a national security law for Hong Kong following major anti-government protests in 2019.

The first thing the legislature will do on Tuesday is receive a lengthy "work report" from Premier Li Qiang that will review the past year and include the govern-

ment's economic growth target for this year.

Many analysts expect something similar to last year's target of "around 5 per cent", which they say would affirm market expectations for a moderate step up in economic stimulus and measures to boost consumer and investor confidence.

Many current forecasts for China's GDP growth are below 5 per cent, but setting a lower target

would signal less support for the economy and could dampen confidence, said Jeremy Zook, the China lead analyst at Fitch Ratings, which is forecasting 4.6 per cent growth this year.

Conversely, a higher target of about 5.5 per cent would indicate more aggressive stimulus, said Neil Thomas, a Chinese politics fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

There will be positive messages for private companies and foreign investors, Thomas said, but he doesn't expect a fundamental change to Xi's overall strategy of strengthening the party's control over the economy.

"Political signals ahead of the National People's Congress suggest that Xi is relatively unperturbed by China's recent market troubles and is sticking to his guns on economic policy," he said.

China's government ministers typically hold their posts for five years, but Qin Gang was dismissed as foreign minister last year after only a few months on the job. To this day, the government has not said what happened

to him and why. His predecessor, Wang Yi, has been brought back as foreign minister while simultaneously holding the more senior position of the Communist Party's top official on foreign affairs.

The presumption has been that Wang's appointment was temporary until a permanent replacement could be named. Analysts say that could happen during the National People's Congress, but there's no guarantee it will.

"Wang Yi enjoys Xi's trust and currently dominates diplomatic policymaking below the Xi level, so it would not be a shock if Wang remained foreign minister for a while longer," Thomas said.

The person who has gotten the most attention as a possible successor is Liu Jianchao, a Communist Party official who is a former Foreign Ministry spokesperson and ambassador to the Philippines and Indonesia. He has made several overseas trips in recent months including to Africa, Europe, Australia and the US, increasing speculation that he is the leading candidate. (AP)

Sri Lanka's tourism sector sees 122% growth in Jan 2024 compared to last year, says minister

COLOMBO, March 3: A Sri Lankan minister on Sunday said the country's external sector performance has seen a marked improvement year on year with tourism fetching USD 342 million in January 2024, an impressive 122 per cent jump from last year.

Speaking in Ruwanwella, his home constituency, Minister of State for Finance Ranjith Siyambalapatiya was delving into the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's external sector indicators issued mid-week.

Siyambalapatiya said the bank figures show that receipts from tourism had fetched USD 342 million, which is a 122 per cent growth in January 2024 year on year.

The inward remittances from Sri Lankan expats in January 2024 had grown by five per cent to USD 488 million up from USD 467 million in January 2023.

The Sri Lankan rupee, which had seen a massive slump during the unprecedented economic crisis, had appreciated by 14.6 per cent in January of this year.

The foreign reserves had increased to USD 4.5 billion in January up 114 per cent from USD 2.1 billion in January 2023.

The economy recorded positive growth in the third quarter of 2023 after six successive quarters of negative growth, Siyambalapatiya said.

Sri Lanka in the second quarter of 2022 had declared bankruptcy announcing the island's first ever sovereign default.

Negotiations with the IMF for a bailout began almost immediately and the first tranche of the USD 2.9 billion facility was released in March 2023.

The finance ministry officials said the IMF officials are due this week to carry out its second review after which the third tranche of the facility could be released by around June.

The IMF-dictated reforms have proved to be unpopular with the government resorting to hard economic measures such as high taxes, cost recovery tariffs for utilities, and a programme to sell loss-making state-owned enterprises.

The opposition had vowed to renegotiate the IMF bailout to grant economic relief to the public hit by the economic crisis. By the end of the year, the presidential election is due to take place. (PTT)

US military aircraft airdrop thousands of meals into Gaza in emergency humanitarian aid operation

WASHINGTON, March 3: US military C-130 cargo planes dropped food in pallets over Gaza on Saturday in the opening stage of an emergency humanitarian assistance authorised by President Joe Biden after more than 100 Palestinians who had surged to pull goods off an aid convoy were killed during a chaotic encounter with Israeli troops.

Three planes from Air Forces Central dropped 66 bundles containing about 38,000 meals into Gaza at 8:30 a.m. EST (3:30 p.m. local).

The bundles were dropped in southwest Gaza, on the beach along the territory's Mediterranean coast. The airdrop was co-ordinated with the Royal Jordanian Air Force, which said it had two food airdrops Saturday in northern Gaza and has conducted several rounds in recent months.

"The amount of aid flowing to Gaza is not nearly enough and we will continue to pull out every stop we can to get more aid in," President Joe Biden said Saturday in a post on the social media site X, formerly known as Twitter.

U.S. Central Command said on X that "the combined operation included U.S. Air Force and RJAFC-130 aircraft and respective Army Soldiers specialized in aerial delivery of supplies, built bundles and ensured the safe drop of food aid."

The U.S. airdrop is expected to be the first of many. Three Biden administration officials said the planes dropped the military Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) — shelf-stable meals that contain a day's worth of calories in each sealed package — in locations that were thought would provide civilians with the greatest level of safety to access aid. Afterward, the U.S. monitored the sites and was able to see civilians approach and

distribute food among themselves, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details that had not been made public.

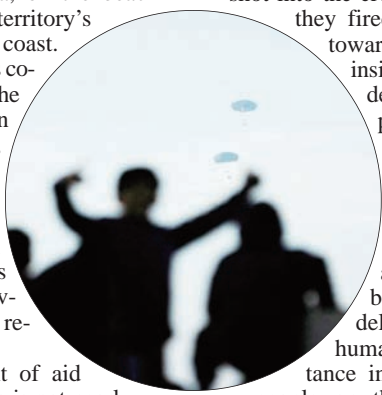
Biden on Friday announced the U.S. would begin air dropping food to starving Gazans after at least 115 Palestinians were killed and hundreds more wounded in the Thursday attack as they scrambled for aid, the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said.

Hundreds of people had rushed about 30 trucks bringing a predawn delivery of aid to the north. Palestinians said nearby Israeli troops shot into the crowds. Israel said they fired warning shots toward the crowd and insisted many of the dead were trampled.

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said Friday that the airdrops were being planned to deliver emergency humanitarian assistance in a safe way to people on the ground. The United States believes the airdrops will help address the dire situation in Gaza, but they are no replacement for trucks, which can transport far more aid more effectively, though Thursday's events also showed the risks with ground transport.

Kirby said the airdrops have an advantage over trucks because planes can move aid to a particular location very quickly. But in terms of volume, the airdrops will be "a supplement to, not a replacement for moving things in by ground."

The C-130 is widely used to deliver aid to remote places because of its ability to land in austere environments. A C-130 can airlift as much as 42,000 pounds of cargo and its crews know how to rig the cargo, which sometimes can include even vehicles, onto massive pallets that can be safely dropped out of the back of the aircraft. (AP)



More than 100 supporters of former PM Imran Khan's party protesting vote rigging arrested in Punjab

LAHORE, March 3: More than 100 supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party have been arrested from different parts of Punjab province of Pakistan for staging rallies against alleged vote rigging, police said on Sunday.

On the call of party founder Imran Khan, supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party held protests across Pakistan on Saturday against the alleged "massive rigging" in the February 8 general elections.

Most arrests took place in Lahore where newly elected Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz ordered a clamp down on the protesting PTI supporters.

"Police thrashed and arrested 80 workers and leaders in Lahore. Over 20 have been arrested in Gujrat city. Protests were held in 38 cities of Punjab and the federal capital Islamabad," a PTI spokesperson said on Sunday.

In Lahore, police baton-charged protesters at GPO Chowk and Liberty Chowk.

"PTI leaders Mian Shahzad Farooq and Afzaal Azeem Pahat, who contested the election last month against Maryam Nawaz and her uncle Shehbaz Sharif, respectively, were also arrested. Farooq had defeated Maryam but the Election Commission of Pakistan had changed the result," the spokesperson said.

Aftab Bajwa, the former bar secretary of the Supreme Court, was also arrested.

Videos of Khan's supporters being dragged out of cars and beaten for displaying PTI flags



were doing the rounds on social media.

Punjab police said they arrested those protesters who blocked the road.

The service of X, formerly Twitter, also remained disrupted in the country on Saturday and Sunday.

The disruption of different social media sites, particularly X, has become an order of the day after the controversy-marred polls.

The PTI has condemned the "brutal" police action to stop the peaceful protest against the massive rigging in elections and stealing the mandate of the people to impose "the mandate thieves" on the nation.

PTI Central Punjab General Secretary Hamad Azhar said: "Controversial and fake CM Maryam Nawaz has committed fascism by using the State's machinery against peaceful protesters."

PTI spokesperson Raouf Hasan denounced the "fascist, coercive tactics and the unlawful use of State machinery" to disrupt the peaceful protest across the country against the theft of

the public mandate.

"The nation will not rest till it reclaims stolen mandate from the thieves. The government of mandate thieves is unacceptable," Hasan said.

Hasan said the people came in droves on the call of their beloved leader Imran Khan to protest against poll fraud, which proved that the mandate thieves rode to power on the coattails of the stolen votes.

"The erection of unconstitutional obstacles and massive police deployment in the way of protesters clearly shows the level of fear of the fake government of mandate thieves."

Hasan went on to say that the people gave a clear and huge mandate to Khan, however, the clear majority was converted into a minority fraudulently through result manipulation.

Hasan made it clear the PTI would strongly resist any attempt to impose the fraudsters on the country.

"We will not accept the fake government formed based on Form 47 fraudulently prepared by the ECP," he said.

He emphasised the future of Pakistan was linked with democracy and democratic values and norms.

Democracy can only be brought in Pakistan by giving people the constitutional authority of decision-making, he said.

"The people of Pakistan will not rest until they snatch their mandate from the bandits, who robbed them of their vote in the dark of night," Hasan said. (PTT)

A ship earlier hit by Yemen's Houthi rebels sinks in the Red Sea, the first vessel lost in conflict

DUBAI, March 3: A ship attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels has sunk in the Red Sea after days of taking on water, officials said Saturday, the first vessel to be fully destroyed as part of their campaign over Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The sinking of the Rubymar, which carried a cargo of fertilizer and previously leaked fuel, could cause ecological damage to the Red Sea and its coral reefs.

Persistent Houthi attacks have already disrupted traffic in the crucial waterway for cargo and energy shipments moving from Asia and the Middle East to Europe. Already, many ships have turned away from the route. The sinking could see further detours and higher insurance rates put on vessels plying the waterway — potentially driving up global inflation and affecting aid shipments to the region.

The Belize-flagged Rubymar had been drifting northward after being struck by a Houthi anti-ship ballistic missile on Feb. 18 in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a crucial waterway linking the Red Sea and the Gulf of



Aden. Yemen's internationally recognized government, as well as a regional military official, confirmed the ship sank. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as no authorization was given to speak to journalists about the incident.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center, which watches over Mideast waterways, separately acknowledged the Rubymar's sinking Saturday afternoon.

The U.S. military's Central Command said early Sunday the Rubymar sank at 2:15 a.m. local time Saturday. It released an image of the vessel on its side as it was sink-

ing. "The approximately 21,000 metric tons of ammonium phosphate sulfate fertilizer that the vessel was carrying presents an environmental risk in the Red Sea," it said in a statement. "As the ship sinks it also presents a subsurface impact risk to other ships transiting the busy shipping lanes of the waterway."

The Rubymar's Beirut-based manager did not respond to a request for comment.

Yemen's exiled government, which has been backed by a Saudi-led coalition since 2015, said the Rubymar sank as stormy weather took hold over the Red Sea. The vessel had been abandoned for 12 days after the attack, though plans had been made to try and tow the ship to a safe port.

The Iran-backed Houthis had falsely claimed the ship sank almost instantly after the initial attack. Late Saturday, a Houthi leader tried to blame British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak over the Rubymar.

"You have an opportunity to salvage the ship M/V Rubymar by guaranteeing ... that the relief trucks agreed upon at that time

would enter Gaza," Mohammed al-Houthi wrote in an online message.

Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak, the prime minister of Yemen's internationally recognized government, called the ship's sinking "an unprecedented environmental disaster."

"It's a new disaster for our country and our people," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "Every day, we pay for the Houthi militia's adventures, which were not stopped at plunging Yemen into the coup disaster and war."

Greenpeace also raised concerns about the ship sinking. "Without immediate action, this situation could escalate into a major environmental crisis," said Julien Freissati, program director at Greenpeace MENA.

"As well as any further leaks of fuel oil from the engines, the sinking of the vessel could further breach the hull, allowing water to contact with the thousands of tons of fertilizer, which could then be released into the Red Sea and disrupt the balance of the marine ecosystems, triggering cascading effects throughout the food web." (AP)

Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar, British Indian chef Asma Khan win India-UK Achievers Honours

LONDON, March 3: Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar and British Indian chef Asma Khan were among the winners of the annual India-UK Achievers Honours in London, which recognises the achievements of Indian students and alumni who have pursued an international programme of study.

The initiative, by the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK in partnership with the British Council in India and the UK government's Department for Business and Trade, was launched last year with the aim of celebrating bilateral educational ties.

At a ceremony earlier this week, the "Class of 2024" made up of high achievers across the arts, sports, entrepreneurship and medicine were honoured following a day-long conference entitled "The Future of Education".

"I am pleased to see that for the second year, you are showcasing exceptional Indian talent that has been developed in the UK," said British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in a message for the event on Wednesday.



"I am extremely proud of the UK-India partnership and the Achievers Honours highlights the strong outcomes that can arise through partnership," he said.

Akhtar, the acclaimed writer-filmmaker behind box-office hits such as 'Luck By Chance' and 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara' and most recently 'The Archies', was conferred the Living Legend Award in recognition of her work in furthering an understanding of India on the global stage. She spoke of her degree in literature and sociology giving her a strong

footing for her filmmaking career.

"I genuinely believe that literature and sociology have helped me immensely in making movies, and writing and telling stories," Akhtar said.

"However, I don't believe one size fits all when it comes to your career path in the film industry... today films can even be made on a phone. I do feel it's a lot easier these days. There is access to a lot more filmmaking tools today," she said.

The 51-year-old daughter of writers Javed Akhtar and Honey

Irani addressed a session on Creative Economies at the conference, during which she reflected on her love of writing.

"I started writing at a very young age because I grew up in a home of writers, so it's just something that you imitate in a very organic way. You are surrounded by those kinds of discussions and narrations," she said.

Also recognised in the field of Arts, Culture and Entertainment this year was UK-based chef Asma Khan, behind the women-led Darjeeling Express restaurant in London. The King's College London alumnus started out in the field of law but has since made a mark for herself in the culinary space, including as a cookery writer behind bestselling recipe books on Indian cuisine.

"I never call myself a chef. I am a cook; and most of my cooking I learn by watching," said Khan, who was recently also awarded an honorary Doctor of Science (Social Sciences) degree by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. (PTT)

South Korean doctors hold massive anti-govt rally over medical school recruitment plan

SEOUL, March 3: Thousands of senior doctors rallied in the South Korean capital, Seoul, on Sunday to express their support for junior doctors who have been on strike for nearly two weeks over a government plan to sharply increase the number of medical school admissions. The rally came as the government said it would begin to take steps Monday to suspend the doctors' licenses of nearly 9,000 medical interns and residents for defying government orders to end their walkouts, which have disrupted hospital operations.

"The government's absurd medical policy has triggered immense resistance by trainee doctors and medical students, and we doctors have become one," Park Sung-min, a senior member of the Korea Medical Association, said in a speech at the rally. "I'm asking the government: Please, stop the threats and suppression now." Protesters chanted slogans, sang and held placards criticising the government's plan. There were no reports of violence.

As of Thursday night, 8,945 of the country's 13,000 medical interns and residents were confirmed to have left their worksites, according to the Health Ministry. The government had said they would face minimum three-month license suspensions and indictments by prosecutors if they didn't return by February 29.

The striking doctors are a fraction of South Korea's 140,000 doctors. But they account for 30-40 per cent of the total doctors at some major hospitals, where they assist senior doctors during surgeries and other treatments while training. Their walkouts have subsequently caused numerous cancellations of surgeries and medical treatments at the hospitals.

Senior doctors have staged a series of rallies backing



the young doctors but haven't joined the walkouts. If they also launch strikes, observers say that would be a major blow to South Korea's medical service. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo on Sunday urged senior doctors to persuade the striking junior doctors to return to work. Police said they were investigating five ranking Korea Medical Association officials accused of inciting and abetting the junior doctors' walkouts. Seoul police chief Cho Ji-ho told reporters Sunday that police had raided KMA offices as part of the investigation. The government wants to increase South Korea's medical school enrollment quota by 2,000 starting next year, from the current 3,058, to better deal with the country's rapidly aging population. Officials say South Korea's doctor-to-population ratio is one of the lowest among developed countries. But many doctors have vehemently protested the plan, saying medical schools can't handle such a sharp increase in the number of students. They say the recruitment plan also does not address a chronic shortage of doctors in essential but low-paying specialties like pediatrics and emergency departments. (AP)

Implementation of tripartite pact key to securing future of Tripura's tribals: Tipra Motha chief

'Tripartite accord a historic agreement aimed at securing future of Tripura's indigenous people'

AGARTALA, March 3: Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Sunday hailed the tripartite accord as a historic agreement aimed at securing the future of Tripura's indigenous people.

He emphasised that the key to success lies in the proper implementation of the pact on the ground.

Tipra Motha, the main opposition party in the northeastern state, signed the tripartite agreement with the Centre and the state government to address the issues faced by indigenous people. It was inked in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Saturday.

Debbarma noted that while several agreements were previously signed with various groups such as the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), and Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT),



they failed to deliver tangible results.

He stressed the importance of implementing the accord with integrity, patience, and humanity, and called for the involvement of experts in academia, law, and those knowledgeable about land rights, history, culture, and language of the state in the joint working committee.

"We want the best minds from the academics, law and persons who have a grip on land rights, history, culture and language of the state in the joint working committee," he said.

Debbarma highlighted the decline in indigenous people's control over land compared to 75 years ago and urged the restoration of land rights, improved education, and healthcare facilities for rural residents.

"Today, the indigenous people don't have control over land which they had 75 years ago. Union home minister Amit Shah himself admitted there was a historical mistake and it is time to find its remedy. We have to ensure land rights, better education and healthcare facilities for the people living in rural areas," he said.

He criticised the BJP, suggesting that their slogan of 'Ek Tripura, Shrestha Tripura' (One Tripura, Best Tripura) would remain unfulfilled if the indigenous people are neglected.

Following his return from Delhi, Debbarma received a warm welcome at the MBB Airport here and announced the conclusion of his fast-unto-death movement upon his arrival at Hatai Katar in West Tripura.

(PTI)

Imagi Meira demands tabling of report on 10 Kuki MLAs' conduct in Manipur Assembly

IMPHAL, March 3: 'Imagi Meira', a women-based organisation on Sunday demanded tabling of a report on "unethical conduct" of 10 Kuki legislators in the Manipur Legislative Assembly in the ongoing session.

The Privilege and Ethics Committee of the state Assembly is looking into the conduct of the 10 MLAs who raised a separate administration demand for the Kukis in Manipur after the violence erupted on May 3 last year.

The committee is looking if the act of the 10 legislators amounts to violating the conduct and ethics of the state Assembly based on the petition. It had even served show cause notices to the MLAs. But no positive response came up from them (the MLAs) so far.

Meanwhile, Imagi Meira has been pressing the state Assembly, through the Speaker, to take action against the 10 MLAs while alleging that they violated the oath they had taken as members of the state Assembly to protect the unity and integrity of Manipur.

Addressing the reporters at Manipur Press Club, Imphal on Sun-

day, media coordinator of the organisation, P Ranibala demanded that the report regarding the finding of the Privilege and Ethics Committee of the state Assembly should be tabled in the state Assembly in the ongoing budget session.

Even if the committee is yet to prepare the final report, a preliminary report of the committee should be tabled in the house in the interest of the people, she insisted.

She said that by adopting the resolutions like abrogation of Suspension of Operation (SoO) with the Kuki based militant groups and reaffirming earlier resolutions of implementation of National Register of Citizenships (NRC), the Assembly has fulfilled some of the demands raised by the people.

Imagi Meira then lauded the members of the state Assembly for knowing the pulse of the people. However, the people would not fully satisfy until befitting actions are taken up against those legislators "who are working against the interest of integrity of Manipur", she said.

Imagi Meira is still hoping with

full confidence that the government, particularly the chief minister and the Speaker will fulfill the demand by tabling the report in the house, she added.

The media coordinator said that it is disheartening that despite the strong pressure from the body with the support of the people, till today, the house is yet to take up the issue of 10 Kuki MLAs for discussion.

Reiterating that the report of the committee should be tabled in the house, she said that the house should discuss on what action could be initiated against the 10 legislators "who are trying to disintegrate Manipur".

If the committee is yet to finalize the report, at least a preliminary report of the committee should be tabled so that the people know the status of the actions that are likely to be taken up against the 10 MLAs, she said.

At the same time, she asked the government what action is going to take against the 10 Kuki MLAs who protested against the state Assembly's resolution to abrogate SoO with Kuki militant groups. (NNN)

NFR introduces two new train services to boost rail connectivity

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 3: In a bid to enhance rail connectivity, the NF Railway (NFR) has introduced two new train services between Jogbani - Siligiri Town and Dibrugarh - Deogarh. Among these services, train No. 15723/15724 (Jogbani - Siligiri Town - Jogbani) will run five days in a week and train No. 15926/15925 (Dibrugarh - Deogarh - Dibrugarh) will run on a weekly basis.

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi virtually flagged off the train connecting Jogbani to Siligiri Town on Saturday.

These Express trains will improve rail connectivity between Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand fostering trade and other economic activities. The regular services of these trains

will run as per following details.

Train No. 15723 (Jogbani - Siligiri Town) Express will depart from Jogbani at 05:40 hrs and will arrive Siligiri Town at 13:30 hrs on the same day. In return direction, train No. 15724 (Siligiri Town - Jogbani) Express will depart from Siligiri Town at 16:50 hrs and will arrive Jogbani at 00:15 hrs on the next day.

These express trains will run on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, commencing journey from Monday.

The Express trains will run via Forbesganj, Arariya, Purnea Junction, Katihar Junction, Salmari, Barsoi Junction, Dalkolha, Kishanganj, Aluabari Road, Thakurganj, Bagdogra, and Siliguri Junction in both directions. The trains will have

twelve second class, three Chair car and one AC Chair car coaches for the passengers.

Similarly, train No. 15926 (Dibrugarh - Deogarh) Express will depart from Dibrugarh at 23:30 hrs with effect from Tuesday and will arrive Deogarh at 06:00 hrs on Thursday. In return direction, train No. 15925 (Deogarh - Dibrugarh) Express will depart from Deogarh at 20:05 hrs with effect from Thursday and will arrive Dibrugarh at 23:00 hrs the next day. These Express trains will run via Dhemajai, North Lakhimpur, Harmuti, Viswanath Chariali, Rangapara North, Udalguri, Rangiya Junction, Nalbari, Barpeta Road, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Jalpaiguri, Kishanganj, Barsoi Junction, Katihar Junction, Khagaria Junction,

Bhagalpur and Mohanpur in both directions. The trains will have two AC 2- tier, six AC 3- tier, seven sleeper class, four second class coaches for the passengers.

The new train services between Jogbani and Siligiri Town will benefit the people of North Bengal and Bihar areas. Similarly, new services between Dibrugarh and Deogarh will significantly benefit the people of North bank of the Brahmaputra and North Bengal areas.

The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available at IRCTC website and are also being notified in various newspapers and social media platforms of NF Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

Arunachal Cabinet approves 39 more faculty posts at state's lone medical college

ITANAGAR, March 3: In a bid to boost the healthcare sector in Arunachal Pradesh, the cabinet approved the creation of 39 additional faculty posts at Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHS), the only medical college in the state, an official said.

The decision was taken in view of upgradation of its intake capacity of MBBS students to 100, he said.

The cabinet also cleared the proposal for creation of the deputy drugs controller's post under the Directorate of Health Services, the official said on Saturday.

In other decisions, the cabinet approved the proposal for two

highway circles at Itanagar and Jairampur.

It discussed about the importance of the 'gaon burah' (village head) institution and cleared the decks for creation of 36 'gaon burahs' in several districts, he said.

The cabinet accorded approval to rename various government institutions after noted personalities, who contributed towards socio-economic development, the official said.

It also approved notifying 23 local languages and dialects of constitutionally notified tribes of the state as third language, as a step to preserve and promote indigenous languages and dialects, he said. (PTI)

Nagaland aims to administer polio drops to 1.55 lakh infants

KOHHIMA, March 3: The Nagaland government on Sunday launched a campaign, aiming to administer polio drops to over 1.55 lakh infants.

Principal Director of Health and Family Welfare, Dr Ritu Thurr, symbolically administered two polio drops to an infant at Seikhaizou Urban Public Health Centre, marking the launch of the programme across 1,550 booths in the state. "The main goal of the programme is to provide all infants and pregnant women protection from vaccine-preventable diseases. Nagaland is targeting around 1,55,550 beneficiaries in the age group of 0-5 years," he said.

The immunisation programme in India is the largest in the world as it targets 27 million infants and 30 million pregnant women across the country. Dr Thurr requested various stakeholders, including NGOs, churches and village councils, to extend a helping hand to ensure the success of the programme. State Immunisation Officer, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, Dr Imkongtemu Longchar said polio drops will be administered in booths on Sunday while home visits will be conducted till Tuesday. (PTI)

Government of India

Ministry of Home Affairs
Sashastra Seema Bal
Office of the Commandant

45th Bn SSB Birpur, Distt-Supaul, Bihar-854340
Email-bn45ssb@gmail.com & ctrl.bn-45@ssb.gov.in
Mobile/Telephone No. 9431821342/06471-223065

No. E-IV/45 Bn/PF/1694/CT(GD)/SK/CRC/2023/4403-09 Dated 26/2/2024

To

UIN-12081694, Recruit Constable (GD) Suraj Kumar,
S/o Sh. Beer Bal,
Permanent address:- VIII - Manduli, Post- Kharikhana, P. S- Lanka,
Dist - Hojai. (Assam) Pin Code - 782446.
Correspondence address:- Vill - Aurangabad Bholalulhas,
Post - Aurangabad, Distt - Kanpur Dehat, (Ramaba), State - (UP),
Pin Code - 209110.

Subject:- **Second Show Cause Notice under Rule-21**

- Whereas**, while posted in 45th Bn SSB you have been absconded on 20.11.2023 from Kishanganj Railway Station and presently you are absconding yourself w.e.f 20.11.2023.
- Whereas**, a letter has been issued vide letter No. 19223.26 dated 01.12.2023 and No. 19859-62 and dated 11.12.2023 at your home address with direction to join your duties but you failed to report in 45th Bn SSB.
- Whereas**, you are absconding yourself without intimation since three months without sufficient cause and have not reported to 45th Bn SSB despite reminders.
- Whereas**, the Court of Inquiry under Section-74 of the SSB Act was conducted to enquire into the aforesaid absence and the said Inquiry declared your said absence as unauthorised.
- Whereas**, Apprehension Roll was issued to concerned Police authority to apprehend you vide letter No. 2219-23 dated 23.01.2024 and No. 2657-60 dated 31.01.2024. You have not reported for duty after the said declaration by the Court of Inquiry and also not surrendered or apprehended by the Police as such you are deemed to be a deserter within the ambit of Section-74 of the said Act and the said offence is punishable under the SSB Act 2007.
- Whereas**, in the facts and circumstances of the case, the undersigned is satisfied that your trail by Force Court for the said offence of desertion under the SSB Act is inexpedient and impracticable, and is of the tentative opinion that your further retention in the service is undesirable.
- And whereas**, a copy of the Court of Inquiry referred to in Para-4 above containing statements of witnesses, and nature of allegations are annexed hereto as **Annexure-1**
- In view of above, you are hereby called upon to submit in writing your explanation and defence in respect of above allegations by 11/03/2024 as to why action to dismiss or remove you tentatively from service for said mis-conduct should not be initiated against you under Rule-21 of the SSB Rules 2009. In case, you fail to file any reply within the stipulated period, it shall be presumed that you have nothing to put forth in your defence and action to terminate your services as proposed above within the ambit of SSB Rule-21 shall be initiated against you ex-parte.

Sd/-
Commandant
45th Bn SSB Birpur

Distribution:-

- The Superintendent of Police, Distt. Hojai, (Assam) - 782446
- The SHO Police Station, Lanka, Dist- Hojai, (Assam) - 782446
- Insp(Hqr), Accounts Branch & CRC/Leave Clerk

Government of India

Ministry of Home Affairs
Sashastra Seema Bal
Office of the Commandant

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Mobile/Telephone No. 9431821342/06471-223065

No. E-IV/45 Bn/PF/1662/CT(GD)/A/CRC/2023/4396-4402

Dated 26/2/2024

To

UIN-12081694, Recruit Constable (GD) Anurag,
S/o Sh. Nathuram,
Permanent address:- VIII - Manduli, Post- Kharikhana, P. S- Lanka,
Dist - Hojai. (Assam) Pin Code - 782446.
Correspondence address:- Vill - Alampur Kheda, Post- Mehera Kanpur Dehat,
Distt - Kanpur Dehat, (Ramaba), State - (UP),
Pin Code - 209306.

Subject:- **Second Show Cause Notice under Rule-21**

- Whereas**, while posted in 45th Bn SSB you have been absconded on 20.11.2023 from Kishanganj Railway Station and presently you are absconding yourself w.e.f 20.11.2023.
- Whereas**, a letter has been issued vide letter No. 19223.35 dated 01.12.2023 and No. 19863-66 and dated 11.12.2023 at your home address with direction to join your duties but you failed to report in 45th Bn SSB.
- Whereas**, you are absconding yourself without intimation since three months without sufficient cause and have not reported to 45th Bn SSB despite reminders.
- Whereas**, the Court of Inquiry under Section-74 of the SSB Act was conducted to enquire into the aforesaid absence and the said Inquiry declared your said absence as unauthorised.
- Whereas**, Apprehension Roll was issued to concerned Police authority to apprehend you vide letter No. 2213-18 dated 23.01.2024 and No. 2662-65 dated 31.01.2024. You have not reported for duty after the said declaration by the Court of Inquiry and also not surrendered or apprehended by the Police as such you are deemed to be a deserter within the ambit of Section-74 of the said Act and the said offence is punishable under the SSB Act 2007.
- Whereas**, in the facts and circumstances of the case, the undersigned is satisfied that your trail by Force Court for the said offence of desertion under the SSB Act is inexpedient and impracticable, and is of the tentative opinion that your further retention in the service is undesirable.
- And whereas**, a copy of the Court of Inquiry referred to in Para-4 above containing statements of witnesses, and nature of allegations are annexed hereto as **Annexure-1**
- In view of above, you are hereby called upon to submit in writing your explanation and defence in respect of above allegations by 11/03/2024 as to why action to dismiss or remove you tentatively from service for said mis-conduct should not be initiated against you under Rule-21 of the SSB Rules 2009. In case, you fail to file any reply within the stipulated period, it shall be presumed that you have nothing to put forth in your defence and action to terminate your services as proposed above within the ambit of SSB Rule-21 shall be initiated against you ex-parte.

Sd/-
Commandant
45th Bn SSB Birpur

Distribution:-

- The Superintendent of Police, Distt. Hojai, (Assam) - 782446
- The SHO Police Station, Lanka, Dist- Hojai, (Assam) - 782446
- Insp(Hqr), Accounts Branch & CRC/Leave Clerk

INDIA bloc leaders sound poll bugle at Patna rally

Great thrones are shaken when enthusiastic youngsters come together: Akhilesh

PATNA, March 3: The opposition bloc INDIA virtually sounded the bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls on Sunday when top leaders, including Rahul Gandhi of the Congress, converged in the Bihar capital for a mammoth rally.

Gandhi, who had flown down from Madhya Pradesh, taking a break from his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', spoke before handing over the mic to AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and returning for the mass outreach programme.

The former Congress president made a brief, about 15-minute-long, speech and charged the Narendra Modi government at the Centre with "working for only two-three super-rich people and neglecting Dalits and backward classes who comprise 73 per cent of the population".

Kharge, after whom the 'Jan Vishwas Maha Rally' was signed off by RJD president Lalu Prasad, lambasted Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for his recent volte-face.

Lauding Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav for ensuring that jobs were created on a large scale during the 17-month-period the latter occupied the deputy CM's post, Kharge said "Your chacha (referring to Nitish Kumar) has done a flip-

flop. He may do so again. But do not accept him henceforth."

Notably, Kumar, who heads the JD(U), had allied with RJD-Congress and Left combine in 2022, snapping ties with the BJP which he accused of trying to engineer a split in his own party.

He played a key role in the formation of the INDIA bloc, though after returning to the NDA, he has been claiming that he was never happy with the way things moved forward in the opposition coalition and that even the acronym did not have his approval.

The most caustic attacks on the Bihar CM, however, came from Lalu Prasad, his arch-rival, who signed off his speech in style, asking the crowds to "be prepared for the upcoming elections. I will be there to boost your morale as you vote to drive out Prime Minister Narendra Modi from power at the Centre".

Recalling Kumar's first volte face in 2017, the RJD president said, "I had not hurled any abuses at Nitish Kumar back then, only called him 'palturam' (turncoat). The label has stuck to his persona by virtue of his own deeds. I can see funny videos about him on social media and wonder whether these do not drive him to shame."

The wily leader had recently fished in the Bihar NDA's troubled waters by claiming his "doors were always open" for the JD(U) boss, who has aligned with the BJP despite the party maintaining that it will pursue the ambition of forming its own government in Bihar.



At the rally, however, Prasad said Kumar would get a "dhakka (shove)" if he again came to him after growing uneasy with the BJP. Prasad, who has been weathered down by old age and poor health, showered his affection on Tejashwi and elder son Tej Pratap Yadav, besides his daughters, including Singapore-based Rohini Acharya, while lambasting the prime minister for criticising "parivarvad (dynastic rule)" in politics.

Known for pulling no punches, the RJD supremo said, "What can we do if Narendra Modi does not have a family of his own? He keeps bragging about the Ram temple. He is not even a true Hindu. In Hindu tradition, a son must get his head and beard shaved upon the demise of his parent. Modi did not do so when his mother died."

Also present at the rally was M V Shreyams Kumar, former Rajya Sabha member and RJD's Kerala unit chief, who had flown down from the southern state.

Those who addressed the rally earlier included Samajwadi Party president and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav, who shared a picture, on X, of himself seated with Tejashwi Yadav and Rahul Gandhi captioned "great thrones are shaken when enthusiastic youngsters come together (jab joshile naujawan mil jaate hain, bade bade takht hil jaate hain)".

In his short speech, Yadav, who has reached a seat-sharing agreement with Congress in his state, said, "UP and Bihar together have 120 seats. If we ensure the BJP's rout in these two states, the party will not be able to form the government at the Centre."

Left leaders like Sitaram Yechury, D Raja and Dipankar Bhattacharya, general secretaries of CPI(M), CPI and CPI(ML) respectively, denounced the Narendra Modi government's policies, alleging these were only benefiting big businesses, even as they praised Tejashwi Yadav's emphasis on job creation.

Tejashwi Yadav, whose just concluded state-wide 'Jan Vishwas Yatra' saw its culmination in the rally, broke into a Bollywood number to taunt Nitish Kumar who "sometimes goes here, sometimes there and slips (dhar chala kabhi udhar chala... phisal gaya)". The rally attracted a huge crowd, with many supporters of the RJD reaching the city on Saturday night and putting up at tents erected at various places where sumptuous meals were on offer.

People had started pouring in at the Gandhi Maidan since early morning and even though the heavens opened, most of them stayed till the rally concluded in the evening. (PTI)

Cafe blast: Police probing different angles including business rivalry, says Home Minister

BENGALURU, March 3: Karnataka home minister Dr G Parameshwara on Sunday said business rivalry, impending elections and terrorising investors coming to Bengaluru in view of a stable government in the state are some of the angles which the police are working on to crack relating to the blast at a city eatery.

The explosion took place at Rameshwaram Cafe in Brookefield in East Bengaluru on Friday. A man wearing a cap, mask and glasses is the prime suspect in the case and is still untraceable.

According to him, eight teams are working to crack the case and they are accompanied by the National Investigation Agency, National Security Group (NSG) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) are assisting the teams.

Parameshwara said one of the angles being probed was to see if it was to terrorise Bengaluru in view of the impending elections. "Elections are approaching. If any organisation is behind it, or if there are some other motives behind it to terrorise people to make Bengaluru look unsafe..." the Minister added.

"As many investors are coming here in view of a stable government, this might have been done either to stop investors from coming to Bengaluru or due to some other unknown reasons," Parameshwara said. The minister said business rivals might have done it out of jealousy. That is one of the angles, which is also being discussed.

He said The Rameshwaram Cafe has 11 units and the owners were planning to set up their 12th unit, for which advance deposit was also paid.

"We will crack it (the case). We will not leave it. However difficult this case may

be, our department will bust it," he asserted.

The minister appealed to people to rely only on the statements issued by him, police and chief minister Siddaramaiah and not on speculative news.

To a question related to a pressure cooker blast in Mangaluru on November 19, 2022, Parameshwara said there was similar assemblage of explosives and other equipment as was in the incident in Mangaluru but that comparison doesn't mean the same gang was behind the blast at Rameshwaram Cafe.

"The way the battery and timer have been used seems similar. We have to take it (investigation) forward. We don't know whether the same organisation did it or the same people did it," the minister said.

He also said it was a low intensity bomb as the explosives used were of low intensity and even the quantity might be less.

If the quantity was more than the intensity would have been higher, he observed.

According to him, there could have been casualties if the bomb had gone off horizontally and not vertically. "I too visited...and saw bolts and nails there. They all went up. If they had gone off horizontally then many people would have got hurt. It could have caused deaths too. Luckily all of them went up..." Parameshwara explained. Speaking about the suspect, the Minister said police have procured about 40 to 50 CCTV footages.

"There is information that he came by a bus...26 buses passed there around that time. We went through all the 26 buses. We have found the bus in which he travelled. He was wearing a cap, mask and glasses. We are not getting clarity there as well," he said. (PTI)

Doors still open for alliance with TMC: Jairam Ramesh

GWALIOR, March 3: Even as the Trinamool Congress has decided to contest all 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, the Congress on Sunday said doors are still open for an alliance with the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC for the upcoming general polls.

Ahead of the opposition's rally in Patna, Congress general secretary and in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh told PTI they are still hopeful and believe that when West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee says she is in the INDIA alliance, her priority is to defeat the BJP.

"We take that as a statement of her priority and intent," he said in Gwalior.

"We have not closed any doors. She has unilaterally announced that she will contest all 42 seats (in West Bengal), well that is her announcement. As far as we are concerned, talks are still continuing, the doors are still open and the final word will not be said till the final word is said," he said.

On the rally to be held in Bihar capital Patna, Ramesh said it is a joint opposition rally and coming after the prime minister went there on Saturday.

"It's a very significant political rally and it shows the opposition unity to defeat the BJP and its allies," he said.

Former Congress president and Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi has also given a break to his ongoing 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' to take part in the rally, he said.

"Today is the 50th day (of the yatra), there has been a slight change because Rahul Gandhi has to go to Patna for the opposition rally and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is also going to participate in it," Ramesh said.

"So this morning, he (Gandhi) is going to have an interaction on the Agniveer issue. Then there will be a road show in Mohna. After that there is no yatra today. But tomorrow, on the 51st day, as planned and as scheduled, we will start from Shivpuri (in MP)," he said. (PTI)

Everyone benefiting from schemes without any discrimination under Modi govt: Yogi Adityanath

GORAKHPUR (UP), March 3: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said everyone is benefiting from the schemes without any discrimination under the Narendra Modi government.

He said a good government's priority is to serve all and exhorted the people to support the Modi government once again in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

He praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, stating that the double-engine government focuses on both development and the welfare of the poor, ensuring prosperity along with security, livelihood and respect for faith.

According to a press statement issued by the state government, the chief minister performed the bhoomi-pujan and laid the foundation stone of the first Veterinary Science College of eastern UP at Tal Nador in Gorakhpur. The construction of this college, to be built on 80 acres, will cost around Rs 350 crore.

Addressing the crowd,



Adityanath said, "In the previous governments, people were troubled by goons and mafia. Only a few benefited from the schemes, while the majority of the public kept watching helplessly."

He emphasised that under the current government, everyone is benefiting from the schemes without any discrimination.

The chief minister mentioned that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the strength of the new India is resonating worldwide. Such a government has never been seen before, and it is essential to understand this and support the Modi government once again in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, realising the slogan of "Abki Baar, Chaar Sau (400) Paar", he stated.

He further mentioned that Dakshinanchal, which remained underdeveloped for a long time, is now progressing rapidly under the double engine government.

Discussing the development of Gorakhpur, the chief minister mentioned that the fertiliser fac-

tory, which was closed during the Congress government, was restarted by the Modi government. A new AIIMS has been established in Gorakhpur, and the link expressway is about to become operational.

The establishment of large-scale industries in GIDA has provided employment to 5,000 youths in the region, he said.

Seeking support for MP Ravi Kishan Shukla, who is the candidate from Gorakhpur in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Adityanath said every party worker will go door to door posing as Ravi Kishan and ask for votes.

UP Minister of Livestock and Dairy Development Dharmapal Singh, MP Ravi Kishan Shukla, MLA Vipin Singh, Mayor Dr Manglesh Srivastava, MLAs Rajesh Tripathi, Shiram Chauhan, Mahendrapal Singh, Pradeep Shukla, MLC and BJP state vice president Dr Dharmendra Singh, BJP district president Yudhishtir Singh and metropolitan president Rajesh Gupta were present during the event. (PTI)

He further mentioned that Dakshinanchal, which remained underdeveloped for a long time, is now progressing rapidly under the double engine government.

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BJP's Asansol candidate Pawan Singh steps aside from Lok Sabha contest, TMC mocks decision

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, March 3: Bhojpuri singer-actor Pawan Singh withdrew from the Lok Sabha poll contest from the Asansol seat in West Bengal on Sunday, a day after the BJP named him as its candidate from the constituency currently represented by the TMC's Shatrughan Sinha. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) was quick to mock the BJP by saying it surrendered the seat even before the commencement of the election campaign.

In a post on X, Singh thanked the BJP leadership for his candidature but added that he would not be able to contest from Asansol "due to some reason".

Though he did not specify the reason behind his decision, his candidature had drawn criticism from the TMC, the ruling party in West Bengal, which alleged that many of his songs were crude and depicted women, including those from the state, in a vulgar way. TMC National General Secretary Abhishek

Banerjee shared Singh's post on X and said, "THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT AND POWER OF THE PEOPLE OF WEST BENGAL."

TMC leader Santanu Sen alleged that the BJP speaks about women empowerment but they are anti-women in reality.

"They are anti-women and anti-Bengali and that is why they had given nomination to him. But realising the people's anger, they were forced to back out," he said.

Asansol is home to a sizeable migrant population and the BJP had hoped that Singh would be an effective counter to Sinha, the actor-politician who was in the saffron party for decades before walking out in 2019.

The BJP apparently decided to nudge Singh to step aside from the contest to defuse the controversy, more so when the party has seized on the Sandeshkhali row to go after the TMC leadership. (PTI)

Cop, Naxalite killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

KANKER, March 3: A police constable and a Naxalite were killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Sunday, a senior police official said.

The gunfight occurred in a forest near Hidur village under Chhotobethiya police station limits, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation. Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said. The operation was launched based on a specific input about the presence of Naxalites in the Hidur forest, he said. Personnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar Fighters, both units of the state police, along with the Border Security Force (BSF) and district force, were involved in the operation, the official said.

The patrolling team was cordoning off the forest when Naxalites fired on them indiscriminately, leading to the gun battle, he said.

"Constable Ramesh Kurethi of the Bastar Fighters was killed in the gunfight. The body of a Naxalite and an AK-47 rifle were recovered from the spot", the IG said.

A search operation was underway in the area, he said. (PTI)

IIT researchers develop marine robot for real-time underwater surveillance, reducing human life risk

NEW DELHI, March 3: Researchers at the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Mandi and Palakkad have developed a marine robot that can cater to real-time problems and reduce maintenance cost and death risk for underwater operation scenarios.

The research which was partially funded by the Naval Research Board (NRB) of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has been published in two journals-- Journal of Intelligent and Robotic Systems, and Ocean Engineering.

The state-of-the-art robot has been developed for meticulous underwater monitoring and inspections, promising heightened efficiency, minimised risks, and potential cost savings, the researchers said.

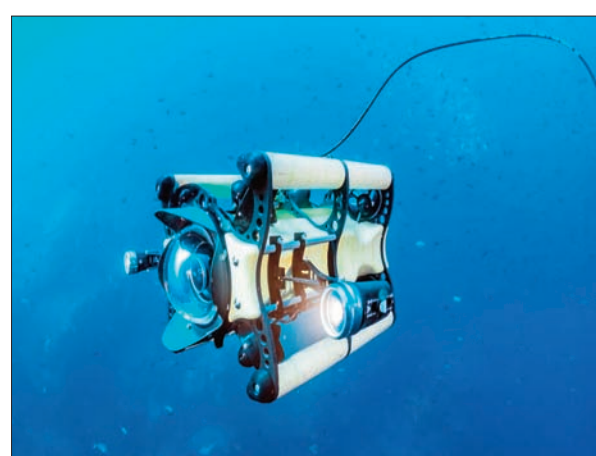
The Earth's surface is covered approximately 71 per cent by water, with the oceans holding about 96.5 per cent of all the Earth's water, where only a tiny percentage of the ocean floor and the submerged ecosystem is known to man.

"As understood from history, the ocean interior has been mainly observed using instruments lowered from research ships," Jagadeesh Kadiyam, Assistant Professor, Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics at IIT Mandi, told PTI.

Kadiyam, a co-author of the study, said typical ship cruises lasted a month or two, therefore making the detailed monitoring of oceans limited.

"It is often said that ocean variables do not wait for the ship to come for measurements," he pointed out.

"This problem of under-sampling and the relatively high cost



of these observation platforms demands technologies that could provide longer observation times at a lower cost through spatial and temporal density," Kadiyam said.

"Similarly, infrastructure safety is a global concern with ageing dams and increased environmental stresses necessitating more advanced inspection methods. Traditional inspection approaches often involve human divers, which can be risky, time-consuming and expensive," he said.

"Integrating marine robots into dam inspection procedures offers a safer, cost-effective, and technologically advanced solution," he added.

Kadiyam explained that the recent open-water reservoir field trials signifies a considerable advancement in the maturity of underwater vehicle technology.

"Our research focuses on the prototype development and performance investigations of an underwater vehicle for intervention and inspection applications. A novel framework has been designed and implemented to cater to the various missions in the oceans and inland waters," he said.

Several simulations and experimental outcomes have proven the system's capabilities in the presence of external disturbances such as water currents and varying payloads, the professor said.

The number of submerged structures is steadily increasing due to the advent of new technologies and the rapid expansion of existing infrastructure for defence or civil purposes. Therefore, it is an essential routine to check, maintain, and repair these structures.

Earlier, the jobs underwater were done by human divers, which posed a long-term health effect but now underwater vehicles can be deployed to reduce human intervention.

Santhakumar Mohan, Professor at IIT-Palakkad highlighted the challenges faced by researchers in developing marine robots.

"From research point of view, the marine robotics community faces numerous challenges due to the uncertain aquatic environment and disturbances. Communication underwater is still tricky

as it predominantly depends on acoustics since the radio waves are hard to pass through the water medium. As this is a niche area, the component cost of the vehicles is also high," Mohan said.

"Other issues include waterproofing, choice of non-corrosive materials, and high-pressure operations under water. Therefore, marine robotic technology will take time to get matured, unlike the vehicles used on land and in the air. Our research focuses on developing systems and designing advanced controls to increase the robot's accuracy, precision, efficiency, and performance," he added.

Various fixed-actuator or thruster setups are commercially available in the market, but surprisingly, the choice of optimised thruster configuration for a specific application is not available so far. The location and arrangement of thrusters and the number of thrusters can change the vehicle's performance in overall.

"Our research provides valuable insight into choosing a specific configuration based on the mission in the presence of unknown underwater disturbances. A prototype test vehicle has been developed and was rigorously tested using simulations and real-time experiments to demonstrate its effectiveness for various underwater operations."

"The deployment of these vehicles could play a crucial role in various applications, such as hydroelectric infrastructure inspection (inspecting submerged structures), environmental monitoring of water bodies (early detection of environmental issues), and search and rescue operations," Mohan said. (PTI)

New startup policy with focus to set up 2,000 startups by 2027 launched in J&K

JAMMU, March 3: Jammu and Kashmir LG Manoj Sinha on Sunday launched a new startup policy with a focus to establish 2,000 startups in the Union Territory by 2027.

The 'New Jammu & Kashmir Start-up Policy- 2024-27' will also provide patent-related assistance, financial assistance for mentorship to recognised startups, facilitation for department for the promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIT) registration and additional need-based support to startups working in diverse fields, Sinha said.

"I invite the potential investors from across the country to explore the unlimited possibilities present in the Union Territory and contribute to the growth journey of Jammu Kashmir," the lieutenant governor said at the launch of the policy at the Avinya Startup Summit here.

On February 22, the Jammu and Kashmir administrative council headed by the lieutenant governor approved the new startup policy in supersession to the startup policy notified in 2018.

The new policy provides for providing entrepreneurship facilities to students and women and support to entrepreneurs through government, private and high net worth individuals (HNIs) for setting up startups.

Terming the launch of the new



policy as a "giant leap for startups and innovators", the lieutenant governor said it has been meticulously drafted to establish 2,000 startups in the Union Territory by 2027, underscoring the commitment of the administration to foster a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem. Highlighting the key features of the new J&K Start-Up Policy, he said the policy aims to set up a Rs 250 crore Venture Capital Fund, with an initial infusion of Rs 25 crore from his administration.

"This fund will provide crucial support for growth, early-stage financial handholding, and it will encourage growth of viable business models," he noted.

Sinha reiterated the commitment of the administration to establish and empower new incubation cen-

tres and seed funding through the J&K Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) for developing prototypes of innovative products and providing additional support to female entrepreneurs through the new startup policy.

Addressing entrepreneurs and innovators on the occasion, the lieutenant governor called for collective action to build a dynamic economic environment in the UT where business can thrive, investment can prosper and entrepreneurs can actualise their aspirations.

He also talked about the challenges and growth opportunities in different sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union Territory has 722 registered startups, with a notable

focus on gender inclusivity, boasting 254 women-led startups.

The Jammu & Kashmir startup ecosystem exhibits a diverse landscape, with construction and engineering emerging as a key player, constituting 49 per cent of the total startups, followed by Skill Development (12 per cent), Oil & Gas Transportation (12 per cent), IT Consulting (8 per cent), Business Support Services (7 per cent), Food Processing (6 per cent), and Agri-Tech (5 per cent).

This showcases the entrepreneurial diversity and the presence of startups across various industries, he said.

The Lt Governor said the policy reflects a comprehensive survey on government support, incubator collaboration and policy requirements. Notably, 69 per cent of startups seek support for Marketing and Branding, while the collaboration with incubators is at 7.89 per cent, presenting an opportunity for increased engagement.

Jammu and Kashmir is home to 12 incubators, playing a vital role in nurturing and guiding startups during their early stages, Sinha said.

He said the ecosystem benefits from collaborations, with 16 partnerships and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) established with various institutions and organisations to provide additional support and resources. (PTI)

Himachal crisis: Pressure tactics will not save govt, say Independent MLAs



SHIMLA, March 3: Pressure tactics such as targeting businesses of Independent MLAs and their families is a futile exercise and will not save the government, said two Independents who voted against Congress in the recent Rajya Sabha polls in Himachal Pradesh.

Speaking to PTI on Sunday, K L Thakur, Independent MLA from Nalagarh, said, "It is unfortunate that the chief minister has stooped to such a level and this kind of politics has never been seen in Himachal Pradesh."

"I have been a former BJP legislator and had been associated with the party for years. I voted as per my ideology," he said.

The Independent MLAs -- K L Thakur (Nalagarh), Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra) and Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur), were among the nine MLAs who voted in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha election for the lone seat from the state on August 27.

The MLAs voting for the Congress candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi failed to make it past the half-way mark in 68-member House.

The Independent MLAs in the state have alleged that raids were conducted at their business firms and Congress workers burnt their effigies.

They have also alleged that the road leading to house of Congress rebel and MLA Lahaul and Spiti Ravi Thakur was closed after he cross-voted against his party.

Pressure tactics of hitting businesses of Independent MLAs and their families is a futile exercise and will not save the government, the Nalagarh MLA said.

A wrong precedent is being set by burning effigies of MLAs and raiding their business firms. The chief minister should not adopt a vindictive attitude and "refrain from acting out of vengeance", Hoshiyar Singh, Independent MLA from Dehra told PTI.

"We have our right to give vote and have voted in the interest of the state", he said and condemned the actions of the Congress government.

"Not even a single work was done in my assembly segment in the past one year and I had stopped giving the demi official (DO) notes for the past eight months," Singh added.

Following the disqualification of the rebel Congress MLAs, the effective strength of the House has reduced from 68 to 62 while the number of Congress MLAs has shrunk from 40 to 34.

The BJP has 25 MLAs and the remaining three are Independents. (PTI)

Modi govt's ruthless approach towards drugs yielding effective results: Shah

NEW DELHI, March 3: The Modi government's ruthless approach towards narco-trade has borne effective results which saw drastic rise in the number of arrests and seizures, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

Writing on X, he also said a drugs-free Bharat is the greatest gift to the future generations.

Shah said an invincible anti-narcotics apparatus has been built nationwide through coordination, cooperation and collaboration among governments and agencies under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The strategy has resulted in an increased number of drug seizures and cases registered," he wrote with the hashtag #DrugsFreeBharat. The home minister said the Modi government's ruthless approach towards narco-trade has borne effective results.

"The upshot of this approach is the drastic rise in the number of arrests and seizures," he said.

Shah said the country is speeding to achieve the goal of a drugs-free Bharat which will be the greatest gift to the future generations.

"Our nation is speeding to achieve this goal through the detection of drugs, destruction of drug networks, and detention of culprits while rehabilitating addicts under the leadership of PM Modi," he said. (PTI)

Denied LS ticket from Chandni Chowk, BJP MP Harsh Vardhan bows out of active politics

NEW DELHI, March 3: With sitting MP Harsh Vardhan's name not figuring from his Chandni Chowk constituency in the list of candidates announced by the BJP for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, he on Sunday announced bowing out of active politics.

In a long post on X, Vardhan said he will return to his roots after over 30 years of a "glorious electoral career".

Looking back at his journey, he said, "I shall continue to pursue my work against tobacco and substance abuse, against climate change and teaching simple and sustainable lifestyles."

"After over thirty years of a glorious electoral career, during which I won all the five assembly and two parliamentary elections that I fought with exemplary margins, and held a multitude of prestigious positions in

the party organisation and the governments at the state and centre I finally bow out to return to my roots," he said on X.

In the first list of 195 candidates declared by the BJP, Praveen Khadwal has been fielded from Chandni Chowk, a seat which Vardhan holds at present.

The former Union minister said service to mankind was his motto when he joined MBBS in GSVM Medical College, Kanpur 50 years back with a desire to help the poor and needy.

"A swayamsewak at heart, I have always been an ardent admirer of Deen Dayal Upadhyay ji's Antodaya philosophy of striving to serve the last man in the queue. It was at the insistence of the then RSS leadership that I jumped into the electoral fray.

"They could convince me only

because for me politics meant opportunity to fight our three main enemies - poverty, disease and ignorance," he said in the same post.

The MP said he had twice served as Delhi health minister and Union health minister.

"Without remorse, I must say that it has been a marvellous innings during which my passion to serve the common man was quenched. I served as Delhi Health Minister as well as twice Union Health Minister, a subject close to my heart.

"I had the rare opportunity bestowed upon me to be able to first work towards creating a Polio free Bharat and then to take care of the health of millions of our countrymen grappling with the dreaded Covid-19 during its first and second phases," he recalled.

He said it was a great privilege to

work with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I must acknowledge that I consider it a great privilege to have worked closely with the most dynamic Prime Minister in India's history, Shri Narendra Modi ji. The country wishes him a heroic return to power again," he said.

In the long history of mankind, only a few have been granted the privilege to defend their people in hours of gravest danger, he said, adding that he can proudly claim that he did not shirk responsibility, but welcomed it.

"My gratitude to Ma Bharati, my reverence to my fellow citizens and my obeisance to the values enshrined in our Constitution. And yes, that was the biggest privilege that Bhagwan Shri Ram bestowed upon me, the privilege of being able to save human lives!!" he said. (PTI)

Included 'nyay' word to my yatra as injustice leading to hatred in country: Rahul Gandhi

GWALIOR, March 3: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday emphasised the importance of "nyay" (justice) during his ongoing yatra, attributing the rise of hatred in the nation to prevailing injustices.

Addressing a gathering in Mohana, located in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district, he flagged economic disparity, social inequality, and the mistreatment of farmers and youth as key concerns. The BJP has been denying all such charges.

Gandhi, on a brief stopover for his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', criticised the adverse effects of policies like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and demonetisation, linking them to a surge in unemployment rates, which he claimed were the highest in 40 years.

"The GST and note ban have fanned extreme unemployment," he claimed, adding "the unemployment rate now was the highest of the last 40 years". The Congress leader further claimed that India's youth unemployment rate was even higher than countries like Pakistan, attributing it to the impact of policies of the government which had taken a toll on small businesses.

Gandhi said while commencing his second phase of yatra he had incorporated the word "nyay" as he claimed that hatred was spreading in the country due to injustice in economic and social sectors and injustice against farmers and



social welfare programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), stressing the significance of utilising funds for public welfare rather than catering to the interests of a few.

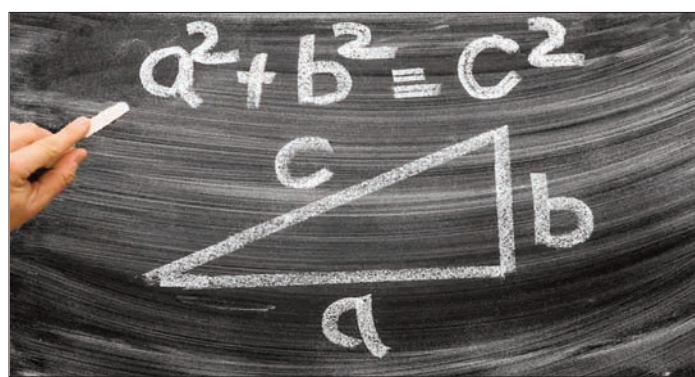
He drew attention to the significant loan amounts written off for industrialists, funded by taxpayers, and highlighted the burden placed on the general public through taxation policies like the GST.

The yatra, a mass outreach programme led by Gandhi ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, entered Madhya Pradesh in Morena district on Saturday afternoon. It will pass through Shivpuri, Guna, Rajgarh, Shajapur, Ujjain, Dhar and Ratlam districts of the state.

The east-to-west Manipur-Mumbai yatra is scheduled to traverse 6,700 kilometres through 15 states. It aims at highlighting the message of 'nyay' (justice) while meeting common people on the way. (PTI)

Gandhi underscored the key financial requirements of key

New study questions Pythagorean theorem of musical 'consonance'



NEW DELHI, March 3: Challenging one of the theorems of Greek philosopher Pythagoras, a new research has found that musical 'consonance', or the pleasant-sounding combination of notes, may not have to be in mathematical ratios to be appreciated by listeners as harmony.

These findings about the impact of instrument tuning on musical harmony appreciation challenge centuries-old Western music theory and throw the field open to more experimentation with instruments from different cultures.

According to Western music's notion of harmony, to a listener, certain chords will sound particularly pleasant or consonant, while others will sound relatively unpleasant or dissonant, the team of researchers, including those at Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Germany, said in their study published in the journal Nature Communications.

Pythagoras's concept of 'consonance' regards the pleasant-sounding combination of notes to be produced by special relationships between simple numbers such as 3 and 4, they said.

However, the researchers said they have showed that in contexts of normal listening, people do not actually prefer chords to be perfectly in these mathematical ratios.

"We prefer slight amounts of deviation. We like a little imperfection because this gives life to the sounds, and that is attractive to us," said the study's co-author Peter Harrison from Cambridge University's Faculty of Music and Director of its Centre for Music and Science.

The researchers found that when

certain musical instruments less familiar to Western musicians, audiences and scholars were thrown in the mix, the role played by these mathematical ratios and relationships disappears.

Familiar Western orchestral instruments included bells, gongs, xylophones and other kinds of pitched percussion instruments, they said.

"When we use instruments like the (Javanese) bonang, Pythagoras's special numbers go out of the window and we encounter entirely new patterns of consonance and dissonance," Harrison said. Bonang is built from a collection of small gongs.

"The shape of some percussion instruments means that when you hit them, and they resonate, their frequency components don't respect those traditional mathematical relationships. That's when we find interesting things happening," explained Harrison.

For their study, the researchers created an online laboratory in which over 4,000 people from the US and South Korea participated in 23 behavioural experiments.

The participants were made to listen different chords and invited to give each a numeric pleasantness rating or to use a slider to adjust particular notes in a chord to make it sound more pleasant. The experiments produced a total of over 235,000 human judgments, the researchers said.

"Western research has focused so much on familiar orchestral instruments, but other musical cultures use instruments that because of their shape and physics are what we would call 'inharmonic'," said Harrison. (PTI)

Uddhav targets BJP, says politics of dismantling oppn parties won't endure

MUMBAI, March 3: The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Sunday criticised the BJP, stating that its policy of undermining other political parties is not sustainable.

Taking aim at the BJP's initial Lok Sabha candidate list, which included figures like Kripashankar Singh, previously accused of money laundering, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray expressed surprise at the exclusion of senior leaders like Nitin Gadkari from the list. Singh, who had faced allegations of financial misconduct, was nominated to contest from Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, as announced by the BJP on Saturday. The BJP has not released its candidates for the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut targeted Maharashtra's Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis (BJP) and Ajit Pawar (NCP) over Singh's inclusion in the BJP list. Responding to remarks made by Thackeray and Raut, Singh claimed he was discharged from all cases by the court even as he questioned the political credibility of someone (read Thackeray) without his own party. Thackeray, without directly naming the BJP or Prime Minister Narendra Modi, remarked, "The politics of dismantling opposition parties will not endure... 'jumla' should be renamed as 'guarantee'."

Referring to the list, he highlighted his past collaboration with Union minister Gadkari, who had expedited the completion of the Mumbai-Pune expressway, a project initiated by Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray. (PTI)

Hanuman floating in glass pyramid, 'Divine Walk' over fluid steel at Ramayana exhibition

NEW DELHI, March 3: Serving as a metaphorical bridge between mythology and surrealism, an immersive art installation at a Ramayana-themed exhibition here depicts the birth and life of Lord Hanuman through a series of animated holographic images 'encased' in a glass pyramid.

The artwork, created by a Gurugram-based multimedia artist and animation filmmaker, draws inspiration from the holy text of 'Hanuman Chalisa'.

"Hanuman's Journey: Verses Through Vision" is among nearly 100 artworks which have been displayed at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) here as part of the 'Ramayanam Chitrakavyam' exhibition that was inaugurated on Friday evening.

The exhibition showcases an eclectic array of artistic masterpieces such as paintings, textiles, sculptures, shadow and wooden puppets, theatrical masks, prints (oleographs, chromolithographs, lithographs), installations, and more by eminent Indian modern, contemporary, and traditional artists, the NGMA said.

The featured immersive art installations are created with state-of-the-art technologies by contemporary artists.

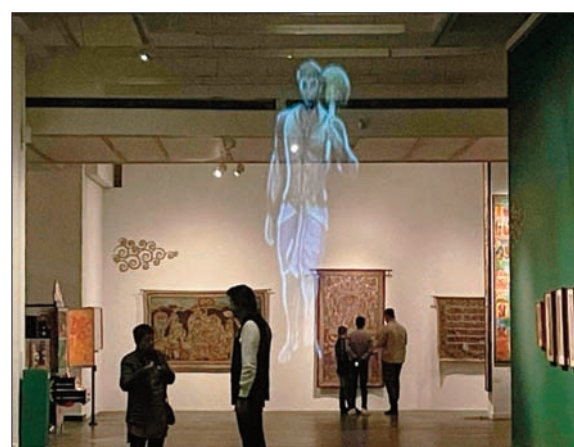
Charuvi Agarwal, who created the hologram-based art installation, says the art piece showcases the story of Lord Hanuman "but in a more visual, metaphorical way".

The idea of the installation was born while working on a short animation film "Hanuman Chalisa" which was made in 2013, the 40-year-old artist said.

"The current artwork is a holographic piece showcasing the story of Hanuman but in a more visual, metaphorical way. In a sense, it's floating. So, you can actually walk around the whole pyramid, made of glass, and in a sense it's reflecting the story inside, it is almost as if the story is captivated inside the glass itself," Agarwal told PTI.

She said the film "Hanuman Chalisa", about 14 minutes long, which she made after some research, became the basis of the various artworks she created later on.

Agarwal, also the co-creator of "The Legend of Hanu-



man" series, said her vision about this installation project was, "What if it was a story floating in a vacuum, you could walk around it, sort of captures the whole journey of Hanuman, from where it all started, how he got power, what pushed him to go on this journey, in a very symbolic manner. Everything is woven together in the form of a story, which is floating."

Asked if she was a follower of Lord Hanuman, the artist said, "I wasn't a Hanuman follower. For the project, I went to Varanasi for six months to understand the holy text. And, the more you dive in, the more you become passionate about the virtues he (Hanuman) stands for."

"The Hanuman Chalisa has 40 verses, all non-linear, and there is absolutely no narrative to it. So, the idea struck for a 'non-linear visual poetry'," Agarwal said.

"I treated every single verse in the form of a painting, a painting was created for every single verse, and that painting was translated into an animation verse. And, all of those works were put together as an entire verse for the film. So, the film is on the Hanuman Chalisa while the art installation was inspired by the Chalisa," she added.

The installation was kept at her home and has been "publicly displayed for the first time", 11 years after it was executed over a period of six months.

And if Agarwal's work depicts 'floating divinity' in a digital avatar, artist Vibhor Sogani has created an illusion of small waves of glistening water using the medium of steel for his installation 'Divine Walk'.

"This work is in steel, mirror-finished stainless steel. It's called the 'Divine Walk'. It is the God walking over water... On top of that is a series of brass steps which are of God (metaphorically). The Almighty can move over water, so that's what I am trying to express here. And that's in gold finish. It's a walk into the horizon," he told PTI.

Sogani, 55, also based in Gurugram, said he conceived this art installation almost 10 years ago.

"The idea that Gods, in all religions, can move over water... since, I work in stainless steel medium, so I wanted to make stainless steel appear like water, like waves, it was a challenge, so that's where the explorations and experiments happened," he said.

Falling shaft of light on the elongated art installation piece at the gallery gives it a shimmering feel akin to the surface of a water body under the sun.

"On the edges, I was able to get that droplet feel, a very special shine, that stands out, which completes the story. This whole wave of water has that glistening water droplet feel. So fluid, so watery, so liquid, yet it's steel," he added.

The steps have been represented artistically with slippers' thongs made of brass with a gold finish.

"I wanted everyone to relate to it, not miss it," said Sogani on the slipper as an artistic representation of a walk.

A caption next to his work reads that the artwork is an "abstract interpretation of the mystical walk of Lord Rama over the ocean towards Lanka".

"The 'Divine Walk' delineates Rama's gentle stride upon the immensity of water, a test of his faith and courage as he journeys to reunite with his beloved, a voyage towards the horizon, both tranquil and serene," it says. (PTI)



JAMNAGAR, March 3: Bollywood's three Khans -- Shah Rukh, Salman and Aamir -- showed off their bromance on-stage on the second day of the grand pre-wedding event of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's son Anant and his fiancée Radhika Merchant.

And what better than grooving to the tune of "Naatu Naatu", the high-spirited Oscar-winning Telugu song from "RRR" that celebrates bonhomie?

On early Sunday morning, dressed in all their finery, a bevy of Indian film stars descended on the stage, set up at a residential township situated close to Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)'s petroleum refinery near Jamnagar

city to celebrate the upcoming wedding.

Fans waiting for Shah Rukh, Salman and Aamir to collaborate on a film got a tiny glimpse of their combined star power when the trio tried to nail the iconic hook step of "Naatu Naatu" with "RRR" star Ram Charan's help. When it didn't go as per plan, Salman took charge and performed the towel dance move from his hit song "Jeene Ke Hain Chaar Din" from "Mujhse Shaadi Karogi" with Aamir and Shah Rukh copying his steps. Soon, Aamir and Shah Rukh followed suit with their tracks "Masti Ki Pathshaala" ("Rang De Basanti"), and "Chaiyya Chaiyya" ("Dil Se") with all three joining in the celebration.

Anant Ambani-Radhika's pre-wedding bash: Khan trio dances to 'Naatu Naatu', SRK chants *Jai Shri Ram*

The Khans then danced to "Naacho Naacho", the Hindi version of "Naatu Naatu", and recreated Shah Rukh's signature open arms pose.

On stage, Shah Rukh also chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' as he introduced the "teen deviyaan" of the Ambani family: Ambani family matriarch Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani, Purnima Dalal (mother of Nita Ambani), and Devyani Khimji (wife of Merchant's grandfather).

There were also solo performances by Shah Rukh and Salman at the pre-event celebration.

While Shah Rukh grooved to "Jhoomo Jo Pathaan" from his 2023 blockbuster hit "Pathaan", Salman danced to a medley of his songs such as "Salaam-e-Ishq", "Didi Tera Deewana", "Tenu Leke Main Jaawanga", and "Saanjhi Ghar Aaye". Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh, Diljit Dosanjh, Kareena Kapoor Khan-Saif Ali Khan, Sara Ali Khan, Janhvi Kapoor, Khushi Kapoor and Ananya Panday also took to the stage on day two of the



grand party.

Deepika and Ranveer, who announced their pregnancy days ago, danced to "Galla Goodiyan", the song from the latter's film "Dil Dhadakne Do". In videos circulating on social media, the couple can also be seen performing dandiya in the audience gallery on a Gujarati song.

The celebration also saw Kareena and Saif join Diljit on stage. The Punjabi singer-actor praised his "Uda Punjab" co-star Kareena, saying "Hogi Rihanna, hogi Beyonce, sadi ta ae he hai Kareena (They may have Rihanna and Beyonce, but Kareena is everything to us)".

He then sang his superhit track "Proper Patola" for Kareena, who will reunite with Diljit for her upcoming movie "Crew".

Diljit's comments come a day after pop star Rihanna performed at the pre-wedding bash in what was her first live show in eight years. In 2018, the Ambani family flew in Beyonce to take the stage at daughter Isha's wedding to industrialist Anand Piramal of the Piramal Group.

Another star couple who performed at the event was Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor. The duo dances their hearts out to their hit song "Kesariya" along with Akash and Shloka Ambani.

Superstar Akshay Kumar also belted out the popular Punjabi number "Gur Naal Ishq Mitha". At the event, Shah Rukh and his daughter Suhana were spotted having the time of their life while dancing to Diljit's "Lover".

The young Bollywood brigade -- Sara, Janhvi, Khushi, and Ananya -- rocked the night with their performance on the song "Bole Chudiyani" from "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...". They were joined on stage by celebrity designer Manish Malhotra. (PTI)

'Laapataa Ladies' earns ₹ 3.85 crore in two days

MUMBAI, March 3: Kiran Rao's "Laapataa Ladies" has raised ₹ 3.85 crore globally in gross box office collection within two days of its release, the makers announced on Sunday.

The Hindi film is a comic take on two brides in rural India who accidentally get swapped during a train journey. It is presented by Jio Studios and produced by Aamir Khan Productions and Rao's Kindling Productions.

Aamir Khan Productions shared the box office update on its official X page. "Public bhi bol rahi hai movie bohot sundar hai! Kya abhi tak nahi dekhe ka #LaapataaLadies?" read the post, stating the movie had raised ₹ 3.85 crore in gross box office collection worldwide and ₹ 1.40 crore net in India in two days.

Starring Pratibha Ratna, Nitanshi Goel and Sparsh Shrivastav with Ravi Kishan in a pivotal role, "Laapataa Ladies" opened to ₹ 1.70 crore (gross box office worldwide) and received good reviews upon its release on Friday.

The film is based on an award-winning story by Biplab Goswami. Sneha Desai has penned the screenplay and dialogues with Divyanshi Sharma credited for additional dialogues.

It is produced by Kiran Rao, Aamir Khan and Jyoti Deshpande. (PTI)



Amazing that Indian women are able to shine their light in Hollywood: 'Mean Girls' actor Avantika

NEW DELHI, March 3: South Asian women, especially of Indian origin, taking center-stage in global titles like "Bridgerton" and "One Day" was long overdue, says Indian-American actor Avantika, who plays Karen Shetty in the new iteration of the popular teen comedy "Mean Girls". This is not the first acting gig for the 19-year-old, born to an Indian family in California. Avantika made her debut with 2016's "Brahmotsavam", a film in her mother tongue Telugu. Priyanka Chopra Jonas ("Citadel"), Simone Ashley ("Bridgerton"), and Ambika Mod ("One Day"), the line-up of female actors with an Indian connect is only getting longer with Avantika's name in it. "It has been a long time coming considering we are a large population with so many incredibly, beautiful, and talented women. It was time that a community of 1.5 billion people was represented on

the global (stage)," the actor told PTI in an interview.

Crediting the women paved the way for actors like her to come up, Avantika said she and her contemporaries hope to do similar for "future generation of South Asian women" so things are a bit easier for them. "It's amazing that Indian women have kind of been able to shine their light in Hollywood... I feel honoured to be a part of this legacy," she added.

Growing up on films such as "Matilda" and "3 Idiots", which she described as a heartfelt portrayal of the human condition, propelled Avantika's love for cinema.

"Matilda" shaped my interest in wanting to be in films. '3 Idiots' is a classic, it was such a big film for me. I am inspired by heartfelt movies that feel like a true representation of what it means to be human and what it means to live," she said.

"Mean Girls", directed by Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez Jr, is billed as a new twist on the 2004 modern classic which comes from the comedic mind of Tina Fey. The new film follows Cady Heron (Angourie Rice), who joins her new high school's elite group 'The Plastics', run by Regina George (Renee Rapp) and her minions Gretchen (Bebe Wood) and Karen (Avantika).

When Cady falls for Regina's ex-boyfriend Aaron Samuels (Christopher Briney), she is at loggerheads with Regina. As Cady sets out to take down Regina with the help of her outcast friends Janis (Auli'i Cravalho) and Damian (Jaquel Spivey), she must learn how to stay true to herself while navigating high school. Avantika landed the role of the gullible Karen, played by Amanda Seyfried in the original movie, through a standard audition process. (PTI)

Wanted to view topic of 'coming of age' broadly: Varun Grover on MUBI's 'Hand-picked by' edition

NEW DELHI, March 3: Writer-director Varun Grover, who has turned guest curator for streamer MUBI's latest 'Hand-picked by' edition, says he wanted to explore various aspects of the theme of 'coming of age' through his selection of eight films, which includes Gamak Ghar, Joyland, and Cleo from 5 to 7.

The phrase 'coming of age' is largely used to describe a journey undertaken by children and teenagers, but Grover said he has 'broadened' the ambit to show transition of both people and places.

"Coming of age' has come to be associated with stories of adolescence and teenage. But I wanted to view the topic a bit broadly and include films which are coming of age of not just kids or people but sometimes of places also," Grover told PTI in an interview.

Citing the example of Achal

Mishra's Maithili title Gamak Ghar (2019), shot in the filmmaker's ancestral house in Darbhanga, the 44-year-old said, "The film is the coming of age of a time period, a house, the people around that house, the era and the feeling when innocence is lost over time and becomes something else."

Influential French New Wave director Agnes Varda's Cleo from 5 to 7 is about a French singer who spends a couple of hours wandering through Paris streets as she waits for the results of a medical test.

"Cleo' is the coming of age of a young woman who just has two hours. Passage of time is another aspect of coming of age and generally that passage is four-five years. But Cleo from 5 to 7 is all about how her life changes within these two hours," Grover, also a poet-lyricist, added.

Director Saim Sadiq's Pun-

jabi-Urdu debut Joyland, which was once banned in his native Pakistan, has nothing to do with teenagers but still fits the 'coming of age' bill, he said.

"A film like Joyland is not about teenagers or children. But it's the coming of age of various people's sexuality, their understanding of the society around them, and how people treat their sexuality. So, that's how I went about looking at multiple aspects of coming of age," the National Award winner shared. While Varda's 1962 French film 'Cleo from 5 to 7' is the oldest title in Grover's selection, Sadiq's Cannes-winning 'Joyland' (2022) is the most recent movie in the list.

Other five films that feature in his curated list are: Barry Jenkins' 2016 Oscar winner 'Moonlight' (English), Jafar Panahi's 2000 title 'The Circle' (Persian), Norwegian film 'The Worst Person in the World' by Joachim

Trier (2021), the 2004 English-language movie 'Primer' by Shane Carruth, and Abbas Kiarostami's Persian drama 'Where Is the Friend's House?' (1987).

Grover, who recently made his directorial debut with the coming-of-age comedy drama 'All India Rank', chose these eight titles from around 400-500 of the 'most popular and prestigious titles' in the MUBI catalogue which traverses both Indian and international cinema.

"I would have probably added three-four more films to the handpicked list but I also didn't want people to feel that I had given them way too many films to watch. So, eight films seemed like a good number," he added.

Before Grover, MUBI has featured curations by filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane and actor-director Konkona Sen Sharma.

A multifaceted personality,

Grover is known for penning lyrics of popular songs such as Moh Moh Ke Dhaage, which earned him a National Award, Womaniya, and Jabra Fan. He has written films such as Masaan, Sandeep Aur Pinky Farar as well as All India Rank.

Grover is also a stand-up comedian who is the co-creator of the political satire show Aisi Taisi Democracy and has appeared in films such as Qala and Bombay Velvet.

Svetlana Naudiyal, Programming Director, Asia, MUBI, said the team is thrilled to have Grover on board for the third edition of MUBI's guest curations. "His artistic vision, characterized by a unique perspective and profound sensitivity, shines through in his film selections. It's only befitting that his curation delicately captures the essence of childhood innocence and the tumultuous journey of young adulthood." (PTI)



Playing 10 Ranji games with three-day gaps tough could lead to injury: Shardul

MUMBAI, March 3: India and Mumbai all-rounder Shardul Thakur on Sunday said that the BCCI will have to relook next year's Ranji Trophy schedule as playing 10 matches with just three-day gaps between games could lead to injuries to players.

Thakur said it's difficult for players to adjust to the three-day gap between knockout matches, which was not the case earlier. "It's difficult because we are playing first-class games in (a) three days' gap — that has never happened in Ranji Trophy season ever," Thakur told the media here after making a fine century in the semifinal against Tamil Nadu.

"You know the schedule is becoming tighter and tighter. If

boys keep playing like this for two more seasons, there will be lot of injuries across the country. "Next year, they (the BCCI) have to re-look at it and give more break," he added.

He said few years back players got more days in between matches in Ranji Trophy.

"When I remember playing Ranji Trophy back in the days, good 7-8 years back, (the) first three games used to have (a) three-day break and then it was (a) four-day break and knockouts were played on five-day breaks. "Now this year, we have seen that all the games have been played on (a) three-day gap. It is extremely tough on domestic players to expect them to play ten games in a row with just

(a) three-days gap if (a) team makes it to the finals.

"Also, when nine teams were in the group, one team would get a break in (the) round-robin system. Now only eight teams being in one group, everyone plays each other, so that break has gone now," Thakur added.

Thakur backed his statement by citing the example of his team Mumbai, which has had to juggle between available resources. He agreed that the current scheduling has not left enough time for the pacers to recover.

"Yeah, 100 per cent because Mohit (Avasthi) also had an injury in the sixth game," he said.

Avasthi was rested from the league stage contest against

Chhattisgarh by Mumbai as he is also believed to have developed a hamstring-related issue.

"He played five games in a row. He had a huge workload because Tushar (Deshpande) was also selected for India A. He was not available. Dhawal (Kulkarni) was playing alternate games, looking at his age and workload. Royston (Dias) is fairly new," said Thakur.

"He (Mohit) operated a lot in those first five games and then he had an injury so he had to miss a game. I think that is because there is not enough spacing between the games," Thakur added.

Tamil Nadu skipper R Sai Kishore, who has led his side into Ranji Trophy knockouts for

the first time in seven years while also crossing the 50-wicket mark this season, agreed with Thakur.

"A few players feel the same thing. Fast bowlers are extra tired because you travel on one day. For me, I don't train much because of the three-day thing," Sai Kishore said.

"I bowl directly match-to-match so the load on my body is fine. I don't strain myself in training pre-match. I am managing myself that way but should be harder for the fast bowlers," he added.

Thakur, meanwhile, admitted that an international comeback for India is not on the cards despite his maiden century across formats. "I think international

comeback is far from now because the Test team is out already for the fifth game (against England) and after this we are going into the IPL.

"It's far, I am not thinking that far. But yes, scoring a century is a big, big relief and also it was very important for the team at that point of time," he added, and his organisation had not paid attention to a draft presented to the International Cricket Council to save Test cricket.

A report in the Sydney Morning Herald said that the three powerful boards were dismissive of a document compiled by New Zealand Cricket chair Martin Snedden, who proposed an overhaul of the future tours pro-

gram (FTP) to save the longest version of the game.

"Categorically, I think there was some misreporting around that. Certainly, the discussions I'm in at the moment are very much thinking about how we can optimise the calendar and how we can continue to grow cricket around the world," Hockley told SEN Cricket.

The changes proposed in the blueprint document include additional windows for T20 leagues other than the Indian Premier League, alteration in the World Test Championship points system, 40-over ODIs, apprehensions about T20s and an effort towards pooling of broadcast rights revenue for bilateral series. (PTI)

Ronaldo's return boosts Al-Nassr's maiden Asian Champions League title hopes

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA, March 3: Cristiano Ronaldo returns from suspension on Monday to try and save Al-Nassr's season and guide the Saudi Arabian team closer to a first ever Asian Champions League title.

Last Thursday, the 39-year-old was banned for one game after making an alleged offensive gesture during a Saudi Arabian league match four days earlier. At the end of a 3-2 win over Al-Shabab, video footage appeared to show Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly thrusting his hand forward near his pelvis, in a gesture that seemed to be aimed at Al-Shabab fans.

The punishment meant that Ronaldo watched frustrated from the sidelines during Thursday's domestic league game as Al-Nassr took the lead four times but ended with a 4-4 draw at home to bottom team Al-Hazm. The result leaves the club in second in the Saudi Pro League and nine points behind leader Al-Hilal.

"Ronaldo strengthens the team and ensures that the opponent respects you more but his absence had nothing to do with the result," said Al-Nassr coach Luis Castro. "The fact is that we are conceding too many goals and the problem is not organizational but due to individual mistakes."

"The league result will not affect our game in the Asian Champions League as we will be fully focused on that."



The continental competition offers Al-Nassr the best chance of silverware this season and the team makes the short trip to take on Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates, winner in 2003, in the first leg of the quarterfinal.

On Tuesday, there is an all-Saudi Arabia clash as Al-Hilal, with a record four continental titles, takes on Al-Ittihad, champion in 2004 and 2005.

Neymar is still missing for Al-Hilal, currently top of the Saudi

Arabia league, while Al-Ittihad is waiting to see if star striker Karim Benzema recovers from a muscle injury.

The two teams met in the league on Friday. Former Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante put Ittihad ahead but Al-Hilal came back to win 3-1 to record a 25th straight win in all competitions.

"The players are playing with great confidence," said Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus.

"This is a good thing because we are facing important teams in a short period, starting with the Asian Champions League and a tough game against Al-Ittihad and we will have to be at our best."

Al-Ittihad, the defending Saudi Arabian champion is now in fifth in the league and out of the domestic title race.

"We are moving in the right direction and the Asian Champions League quarterfinal is now the

most important game of the season for us," said Ittihad defender Ahmed Hegazy. "We know that it will be tough against Al-Hilal but this is a different game and we are focused on this."

In the eastern zone, —the tournament is split into two geographic halves until the final — there is an all-South Korean clash as Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors takes on Ulsan HD.

Both teams have won two titles each. (AP)

Messi, Suarez score twice as Inter Miami rout Orlando City 5-0

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., March 3: The scoring artistry that Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez showcased often during their six years in Barcelona was on full display again Saturday. Inter Miami hopes it's a sign of repeated performances.

Messi and Suárez scored two goals each and Inter Miami routed Orlando City 5-0, the largest victory margin in team history.

Messi had consecutive goals during a quick span early in the second half. It was his first two-goal game in MLS action.

The 37-year-old Suárez became the latest ex-Barcelona teammate to join Messi at Inter Miami and made an immediate impact in his third MLS match. Suárez also had two assists.

"He knows everything about me, and I think we will continue to do so," Suárez said of excelling with Messi again. Former Barcelona stars and Messi teammates Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba also are in their first full MLS season with Inter Miami after joining Messi last summer.

"Those guys aren't here to put their feet up," Julian Gressel said. "We've seen it over the last few weeks. They're trying to do everything for the team to win. Tonight is a really good example of that."

With a prolific career that has resulted in 381 club goals over 19 seasons, Suárez scored his first two in the MLS within a seven-minute sequence early in the first half.

"We know what Luis is capable of," Messi told Apple TV after the match. Robert Taylor scored the fifth goal and Gressel had two as-

ists for Inter Miami (2-0-1, 7 points), which is unbeaten through three games for the first time in club history. Orlando City dropped to 0-1-1.

Inter Miami fans were barely settling in when Suárez struck four minutes into the match. Messi initiated the strike as his long pass found an open Gressel on the right wing. Gressel then centered to an open Suárez, who one-timed a shot inside the right post.

"The first goal, that changes the whole game, doesn't it?" Messi said. The combination of Gressel and Suárez clicked again seven minutes later. From the left wing, Gressel sent another crossing pass to Suárez. Suárez beat defender Wilder Cartagena to the ball,

dribbled into the large area and converted the past goalkeeper Pedro Gallese from 12 yards.

Suárez turned distributor for Taylor's goal in the 29th minute. Suárez's cross from the right wing found an open Taylor against

an unsuccessful offside trap by the Orlando City backline. Taylor tapped in a 15-yard shot. "I try my best every time I'm on the pitch," Suárez said. "Today we did a really good job and I hope the Miami fans are happy."

Messi joined the scoring onslaught with his first goal in the 57th minute. Suárez's shot deflected off the crossbar and an unmarked Messi easily tapped in the shot inches from the goal line.

Suárez's centering pass from the left wing found an open Messi, whose header in the 62nd minute closed the scoring. (AP)



Aditi finishes 21st in Singapore, Australia's Green wins title



SINGAPORE, March 3: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok finished 21st at the women's World Championship with a final card of 2-under 70 here on Sunday after being in top-10 in the first two days.

Aditi had an early bogey, but recovered well with three birdies on the Par-5s on the fifth, eighth and 13th and another one on Par-4 ninth.

She dropped a bogey on the closing 18th. Aditi, who was making her debut in the event, shot 72-69-73 in her earlier rounds.

Australia's Hannah Green, shot her third straight 67 after 74 start in the first round, to total 13-under and win the title one shot clear of French golfer, Celine Boutier (67).

A week ago Aditi was T-

31 at the Honda LPGA. Aditi, a five-time Ladies European Tour winner, is already certain to play her third Olympic Games in Paris this year.

Four players, Japanese duo Yuna Nishimura (66) and Nasa Hataoka (69), Korea's Mi Hyang Lee (67) and Canadian Brooke Henderson (68) were tied for third place.

Green had a stunning finish as she rolled in three birdies in a row on the last three holes to grab a well-deserved win. The icing on the cake was the 20-foot putt Green holed on the 18th to pip World No. 3 Boutier by one shot.

Boutier, who had three birdies on the back nine, failed to make any more in her last three holes. (PTI)

Vaughan wants England cricket team to adopt Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola's approach

LONDON, March 3: For Michael Vaughan, Pep Guardiola is the best sporting leader in the last 15 years and the former England skipper won't mind if Ben Stokes employs Manchester City manager's approach of never allowing players to take their places for granted.

Vaughan made the statement on the back of England's aggressive "Bazball" strategy under coach Brendon McCullum and Stokes which backed in the on-going India tour.

England have already lost the five-match series 3-1 after winning the first Test in Hyderabad.

Vaughan questioned the approach of England batters and demanded greater accountability from them.

"I often mention Pep Guardiola's approach. In my eyes he's the best sporting leader of this generation, say the last 15 years. He never allows his players to get comfortable. He always keeps them guessing, and they all know they are guaranteed nothing," he

wrote in a column for Daily Telegraph.

"If a great sporting leader like Pep has everyone on their toes like that, is it right that an England cricket team that is decent but struggling to crack the next level should be as comfortable as it seems? "The whole batting lineup has known week in, week out on this tour that it will be playing the next game. That is about to change, because after this tour Harry Brook will be back. He has to bat at No 5, because he should be the bedrock of their batting with Joe Root. Does that mean England's statement moment is coming?," he questioned.

Vaughan questioned England's selection policy and said despite losing the series the visitors have a lot at stake to play for in the final Test in Dharamsala beginning March 7.

"Consistency of selection is such a fine balance in team sports. Making people comfortable is right, and England have



generally batted well over the last two years.

"There comes a point, though, where when it's your batting that is costing you the biggest series you can't keep sending the same guys out there every week," he wrote.

"The series may have been lost already with a game to spare but a big week looms for England in Dharamsala. There is a massive difference between losing the series 3-2 and 4-1. You have lost either way but 3-2 would show England were right in this series

for much of it, and two wins in India is an achievement," Vaughan said a loss in Dharamsala would be a demoralising result for England.

He once again criticised England's batters approach. "India haven't lost two matches in a series at home since 2012, on their run of 17 series wins in a row. 4-1 would be a very disappointing end to a disappointing winter, with the World Cup debacle, both white-ball series lost in the Caribbean and even a poor World Cup for the Under 19s," he wrote.

"It's a huge week for a number of England's batsmen. When we think of this England team, we think of their wonderfully dynamic batting. But when you look at why they haven't won any of their last three series, it's down to the batting.

"There never seems to be much scrutiny or noise around England's batsmen. Even last week I chuckled. They lost in Ranchi in large part because they

didn't bat well enough, but there was lots of finger pointing at Ollie Robinson, a bowler who scored an important half-century!"

"He looked well short of a gallop with the ball and dropped a catch but I thought it was ironic that he became a scapegoat. It's classic 'batsmen vs bowlers stuff.' Vaughan feels when it comes to team selection there should be consistency in the batting order.

"Complacency can be damaging. As a management team, how you approach selection of batsmen and bowlers is obviously different. Fast bowlers, especially, sit out games and are rightly rotated to preserve their bodies," he wrote.

"With batsmen you want consistency. When you play like England do, backing is important. Aggressive, expansive cricket means mistakes will be made. Players need to have the confidence to take on risky shots without fear that they will be dropped immediately. That is good, and as captain I always

preferred to give a player one game too many than one too few." In hindsight he also took a dig at McCullum and Stokes for their approach.

"I do wonder, though, if this England setup backs backing a bit too far. Since Ben Stokes and Brendon McCullum took over, only one batsman has been dropped, and even that was the tamest dropping you will ever see.

"England inherited Alex Lees from the previous regime and gave him a crack, but always had their eye on Ben Duckett to open with Zak Crawley so simply moved Lees on at the end of their first summer," he wrote.

"Ultimately, on any sporting team's road to greatness, you need a moment, a rod, where every player realises 'wow, maybe I'm not part of the furniture'. As soon as people think they are part of the furniture it creates a bit of comfortable complacency, which can be damaging." (PTI)

Lyon masterclass leads Australia to 172-run win against New Zealand in 1st test

WELLINGTON, March 3: Nathan Lyon took ten wickets for the match and brought New Zealand's attempted fight back in the first test to a shuddering halt as Australia completed a 172-run win on Sunday and took a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

New Zealand resumed at 111-3 on the fourth day in its second innings and collapsed in the face of superb spin bowling from Lyon (6-64) to be all out for 196 a few minutes after the scheduled lunch break.

Lyon completed match figures of 10-108, his fifth 10 wicket bag, which went along with his 41 as night watchman in Australia's second innings.

The Black Caps were unable to sustain the stubborn fight back they had begun to produce on day three when Australia was bowled out for 164 in its second innings for an overall lead of 368.

Glenn Phillips took 5-43 to limit Australia as it tried to build on its first innings lead of 204. Rachin Ravindra's unbeaten 56 before stumps on day three fanned New Zealand's faint hope that it might be able to head off defeat.

But Ravindra was out for 59 in only the seventh over of the morning and with his departure New Zealand's resistance appeared to falter, then break.

Ravindra was Lyon's first victim on the final day, tempted into the

cut shot at a ball turning away from off stump. With the extra bounce he was unable to keep the shot down and was caught by Cameron Green.

Tom Blundell lasted three balls and was caught by Travis Head at short leg off Lyon, undone by the bounce as the ball hit the bat and thigh pad before looping to the fielder.

Phillips fell lbw to Lyon for 1 and the last sparks of resistance were blown out when Scott Kuggeleijn (26), Matt Henry (14) and Tim Southee (7) all fell before lunch. Daryl Mitchell was the last man out for 38.

"It was a really good game overall I think," Australia captain Pat Cummins said. "We never felt we were too far ahead on that wicket."

"The pitch was really bouncy and had a bit of pace in it but more bounce than I've seen in any wicket for a long time. Fortunately it spun, which with Nathan Lyon on our side is a good thing."

Lyon completed his 24th five wicket bag in tests with Phillips' wicket, providing an odd symmetry as the Australian off-spinner dismissed his New Zealand counterpart who also had taken five wickets in the match.

With the pitch at the Basin Reserve still providing bounce for the spinner and with a steady breeze assisting his drift, Lyon was almost



unplayable at times in the morning Sunday. He became most effective when he switched from the north-

ern to the southern end and began to find the bounce which made him so difficult to handle.

His contribution to the match was enormous both with bat and ball and he played a major part in

turning the match in Australia's favor. Australia now commands the series which continues with the

second test in Christchurch from Friday.

Australia's win in Wellington was set up by its first innings of 383 after it had been sent in on a greenish pitch. But it was Cameron Green's unbeaten 174 and his 116-run last wicket partnership with Josh Hazlewood that really turned the game towards the tourists.

Australia had been 279-9 at the end of the first day but Green and Hazlewood added a further 104 runs, batting through all of the first session on day two. Those runs became more important in the context of the match as contest became closer later on.

"I think it was a brilliant bowling innings from us and I think (Lyon) bowled beautifully on the last day," Green said. "He's always under pressure in the fourth innings and he always seems to be able to stand up and perform."

New Zealand was bowled out for 179 in its first innings after being 29-5. Phillips' defiant 71 helped New Zealand to a more respectable total.

Then Phillips claimed his first five wicket bag in tests as Australia was bowled out for 164. New Zealand couldn't continue its rally Sunday and was bowled out in 64.4 overs.

"Like every game we'll reflect and look at ways we can be better in the next one," New Zealand captain Tim Southee said. (AP)

Shardul Thakur-led Mumbai's rearguard puts Tamil Nadu on mat in Ranji Trophy semifinal

MUMBAI, March 3: Shardul Thakur's sizzling 109 and Tanush Kotian's unbeaten 74 offset R Sai Kishore's six-wicket haul, putting Mumbai in command by powering to a 207-run first-innings lead over Tamil Nadu on the second day of the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

Thakur's sensational counterattacking hundred, featuring 13 fours and four sixes from a mere 104 balls, pulled Mumbai out of doldrums after they were reduced to 106 for seven at one stage.

At stumps, Mumbai were 353 for 9 at stumps against TN's first innings' 146, with Sai Kishore causing the maximum damage.

Sai Kishore (6/97) ran through a chunk of Mumbai's batting line-up, while Shreyas Iyer (3) fell to pacer Sandeep Warrier as Tamil Nadu levelled up with the hosts for the first time in the game.

But Thakur launched a stunning onslaught, putting each of Tamil Nadu bowlers under severe pressure while forging vital partnerships along the way to take Mumbai far ahead in the game.

Thakur teamed up with Hardik Tamore (35) for a crucial 105-run stand for the eighth wicket and took Mumbai further ahead in the company of Kotian, adding another 79 runs for the ninth wicket.



Using his blade to perfection, Thakur was adroit with his hands to pierce gaps at will and did not miss out clearing the field with disdain four times for maximums — one of which also brought up his maiden century

across formats.

Thakur, who also struggled with an ankle-related issue along the way, finally fell to Kuldeep Sen (2/65) in the third session, which brought the pair of Kotian and Tushar Deshpande together again after their heroics in the last match.

Coming off a 232-run stand for the 10th wicket in the previous match, Kotian and Deshpande picked from where they left off to put on another 63-run unbeaten stand for the 10th wicket.

With Deshpande (17 not out) joining him much later in his innings, Kotian excelled in this innings like a specialist batter, cracking 10 fours from 109 balls to get to 74 not out.

If it were not for yet another rearguard from their tailenders, who shone in the quarterfinal as well, Mumbai would not have ended the day's play with a massive lead, for most of their key batters cut a sorry figure.

On a cloudy morning with breeze sweeping across the field here at the BKC Ground, Sai Kishore's decision to open the bowling in conditions conducive to seamers raised a few eyebrows.

But the Tamil Nadu skipper and leading wicket-taker this Ranji Trophy only validated his move with relentless pressure on the Mumbai batters, delivering a superb 17-

6-28-4 in the first session, and took a break only after sending down 22 overs at a stretch.

After nightwatchman Mohit Avasthi (2) was stumped, Sai Kishore ended his counterpart Ajinkya Rahane's 67-ball vigil for a mere 19 (2x4s) by getting him caught at the first slip.

Rahane strode out confidently to defend on the front foot but only to have the ball kissing the outside edge and being collected by Baba Indrajith at the first slip.

Mumbai's woes compounded when Iyer, pounded by lack of runs and loss of central contract, was cleaned by Tamil Nadu pacer Warrier for a mere three.

But Musheer (55 off 131 balls, 6x4s) continued to take giant strides, shouldering the responsibility of getting runs for his side from the other end. The 18-year-old also made no retorts when Tamil Nadu fielders, both in front and behind him, tried to unsettle him. However, a lapse in concentration saw Musheer's innings ending prematurely when his backfoot was caught 'on line' at the crease with N Jagadeesan quick in taking off the bats. Brief scores: Tamil Nadu 146 trail Mumbai 353/9 in 100 overs (Musheer Khan 55, Shardul Thakur 109, Tanush Kotian 74*; R Sai Kishore 6/97) by 207 runs. (PTI)

Praggnanandhaa checkmates Gujrathi, Gukesh falters against Navara



PRAGUE, March 3: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defenses of compatriot Vaidit Gujrathi but D Gukesh suffered a shock defeat from a position of strength against Czech Republic's David Navara of in the fifth round of the Prague Masters here.

Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattarov continued with his dream run and ran over Mateusz Bartel of Poland to emerge as the sole leader ahead of Parham Maghsodloo of Iran, who played out a draw with Hungarian turned Romanian Richard Rapport.

In the other game of the day, local hopeful Nguyen Thai Dai Van played out a draw with Vincent Keymer of Germany.

With just four rounds to come in the super tournament, Abdusattarov sits pretty on four points out of a possible five and the Uzbek has in fact broken in the top five of world rankings now.

Maghsodloo is now half a point behind on 3.5 points followed by Rapport on three. Praggnanandhaa walked his way back on 50% score at the expense of Gujrathi and shares the fourth spot with Navara and Gukesh. Dai Van, Keymer and Gujrathi come in next on two points apiece followed by Bartel who has a single point in his kitty.

Gujrathi was up against an English opening and equalised without much ado even though the complications remained.

Praggnanandhaa, who is never short of ideas no matter what the position is on board, kept pushing for more in the middle game but Gujrathi was also up to the task in finding the right path.

The pieces changed hands and the players arrived at a Queen and rook endgame with resources for both sides, before Gujrathi fumbled and allowed a devastating attack against his king. Praggnanandhaa won in 52 moves.

Gukesh had what looked like an extra healthy pawn in the endgame and had little to worry.

However, the Indian was clearly not having a good day in final phase of the game as Navara pushed for some counterplay.

As it happened in the game, first the advantage slipped, then it was handed over to Navara which the Czech star converted after some hard-work.

Abdusattarov made quick work of Bartel in just 28 moves. The Uzbek made his intentions clear by going for the Sicilian dragon and clearly the Polish Grandmaster was short on ideas. It was an optical illusion as Bartel set out for a King side play but the damage was quicker on the other flank.

In the Challengers section Grandmaster R Vaishali went down to Erwin L'Ami of Holland and stayed on two points.

Meanwhile in the Shenzhen Masters being held in China Arjun Erigaisi came up with a super effort to down Anish Giri of Holland.

Results round 4 (Indians unless stated): R Praggnanandhaa (2.5) beat Vaidit Gujrathi (2.5); Parham Maghsodloo (Iri, 3.5) drew with Richard Rapport (Rou, 3); D Gukesh (2.5) lost to David Navara (Cze, 2.5); Nguyen Thai Dai Van (Cze, 2) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 2); Mateusz Bartel (Pol, 1) lost to Nodirbek Abdusattarov (Uzb, 4). (PTI)

India climb to top spot in WTC standings

DUBAI, March 3: Two-time finalists India jumped to the top of the World Test Championship standings, replacing New Zealand in the latest rankings issued on Sunday.

India, who defeated England by five wickets in the fourth Test in Ranchi to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series, replaced the Kiwis with a stronger points percentage of 64.58.

With five wins, two losses and one draw, India have 62 points in 8 matches, while the Black Caps have 36 from five matches (three wins, two losses) and have a point-percentage of 60.00.

Before the start of the Wellington Test, New Zealand were sitting at the top of the table with 36 points in four games and a points percentage of 75.

But following their massive 172-run defeat, the 2021 WTC champions lost the top spot, slipping to the No 2 position with a points percentage of 60.

Third-placed Australia have closed on the gap after the Wellington Test, gaining 12 crucial points as they now have 78 points from 11 matches (seven wins, three losses and one draw). (PTI)

Himanshu Mantri hundred gives MP edge over Vidarbha

NAGPUR, March 3: Himanshu Mantri showed patience and technical aptitude while constructing a fine hundred to singlehandedly guide Madhya Pradesh to 252 in their first innings against Vidarbha on the second day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

Mantri's 126 off 265 balls (13x4, 1x6) helped Madhya Pradesh to gain a small yet significant 82-run lead after beginning the day at 47 for one.

In their second innings, Vidarbha reached 13 for the loss of Atharva Taide at stumps, trailing by 69 runs.

The importance of Mantri's knock, his third hundred of the season, can be gauged from the fact that the next highest score in MP innings was a 30 by Saransh Jain.

But in the morning session, Madhya Pradesh made a steady start through Mantri and Harsh Gawli as the second wicket pair stretched their alliance to 61 as Vi-

darbha reached 81 for one.

But pacer Yash Thakur (3/51) trapped Gawli (25, 77b) in front of the wicket to snap the stand and Vidarbha lost two more wickets while adding another 12 runs.

Veteran speedster Umesh Yadav (3/40) yorkeed hosts skipper Shubham Sharma (1) and Thakur won an appeal for leg-before against shuffling Venkatesh Iyer (0).

Vidarbha slipped to an uncomfortable 93 for four but Sagar Solanki (25) gave Mantri solid support as the fifth wicket duo milked 42 runs to steady the ship.

A mix-up with Mantri saw Solanki getting out but a more solid period followed.

Mantri found another willing partner in Jain as the duo added 73 runs for the sixth wicket, taking MP past Vidarbha's first innings total of 170. (PTI)

Will New Zealand recall retired Neil Wagner for Christchurch Test?

WELLINGTON, March 3: New Zealand might be tempted to recall retired pacer Neil Wagner to the side for the second and final Test against Australia following an injury to fast bowler Will O'Rourke.

The hosts suffered a crushing 172-run defeat in the opening Test here on Sunday and skipper Tim Southee said the door was not shut on Wagner, who had bid a tearful adieu to international cricket last week after taking 260 wickets in 64 Test matches.

The South Africa-born pacer had announced the decision to retire days before the Test series against Australia after learning that he won't feature in the opening game and will be released from the squad for the second Test in Christchurch, starting March 8.

"We haven't had a lot of discussions as yet. We'll see how Will scrubs up. The physio hasn't sort of put a time-frame on it or how bad it is. We'll just wait and see how Will goes over the next couple of days. I'm sure there'll be an update in the next 24 hours," said Southee.

"We obviously have to go on and make a



decision on who comes in and what role we sort of see playing out in Christchurch.

"(Wagner's) had a great reception here over the last week where he got a couple of

moments on the field and obviously he's been a fan favourite for a long time," said the home skipper.

Southee was sure that pacer Trent Boult, who last played in a Test in June 2022, won't play the second game.

"I don't think his loading is up to it on the back of T20," Southee said.

Southee had requested to be left out of New Zealand's central contract list in August, 2022.

Meanwhile, Australian skipper Pat Cummins backed Wagner to come out of retirement.

"World's shortest retirement. I mean, why not? If he's your next best bowler that you think is going to perform, then go for it. I've faced him before. It'd be good to see. He's high energy. It's been good fun chatting to him each morning out here, so see how he goes," said Cummins.

Australia have retained the Trans-Tasman Trophy for the 12th successive time after ensuring that they won't lose the series with their victory in the series-opener. (PTI)